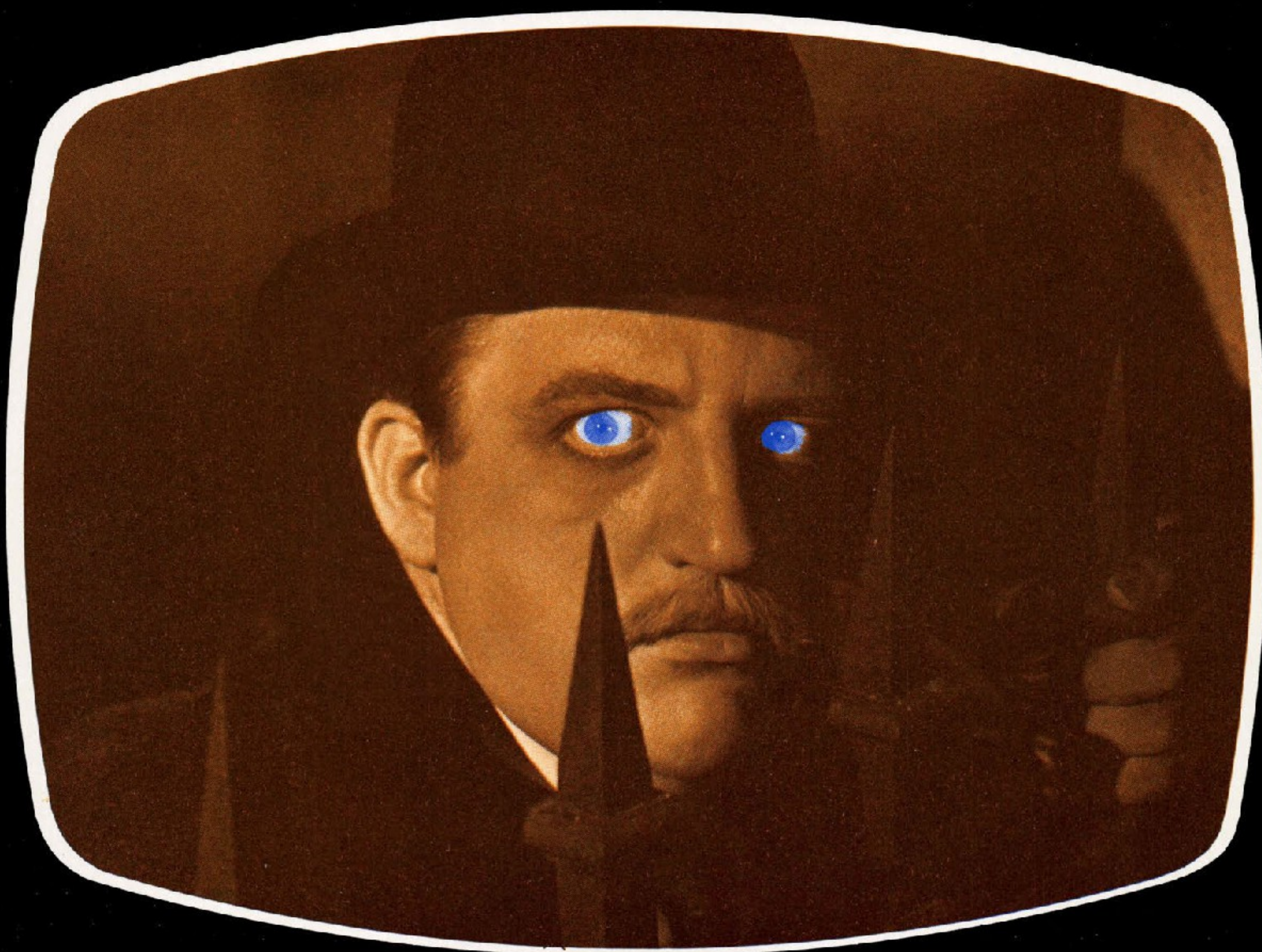


Video Watchdog®

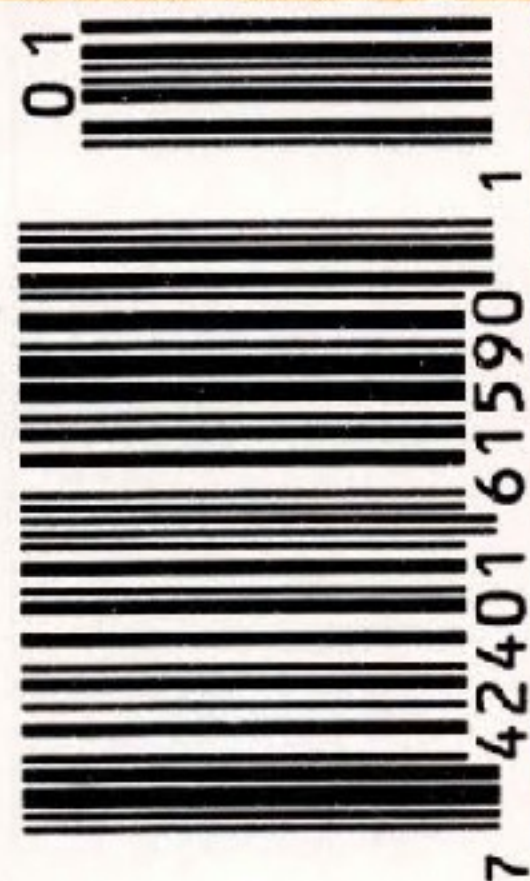
the Perfect Fan's
Guide to
Fantasy

16 MORE PAGES!

No. 15 \$5.50
Jan / Feb 1993



\$5.50



HOLLYWOOD'S RELUCTANT RIPPER

LAIRD CREGAR

BATMAN RETURNS

New ALIEN & HAMMER Discs!

RARITIES • RETITLINGS • RESTORATIONS



Video the Perfectionist's Watchdog® Guide to Fantastic Video

No. 15
Jan / Feb 1993

*"Nothing frightens me more
than religion at my door."*

—John Cale

Contents

FEATURES

LAIRD CREGAR Hollywood's Reluctant Ripper 30

Gregory Mank pays tribute to the tragic, short-lived actor with this production history of his greatest success—John Brahm's classic 1944 thriller, *THE LODGER!*

John Brahm Videography 52

DEPARTMENTS

Kennel 2

The Watchdog Barks 3

Watchdog News 4

Retitlings 7

Addresses 29

The Letterbox 77

Front: Laird Cregar as the tormented Ripper in *THE LODGER* (1944).

Inside: *THE LODGER* (Laird Cregar) leans on the "beautiful old Bible" found in his new lodgings.

Back: Meow! Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer) sweeps Batman (Michael Keaton) off his feet in *BATMAN RETURNS* (1992).

INTERVIEW

JOHN BRAHM The Last Interview 49

David Del Valle captured the great director's final reminiscences on tape 13 years ago, and presents them here for the first time anywhere!

REVIEWS

Video Around the World 8

USA by *Tim Lucas* 8

Animation by *G. Michael Dobbs* 22

Asia by *Erik Sulev* 23

Canada by *John Charles* 25

France by *Lucas Balbo* 26

Germany by *Peter Blumenstock* 26

Italy by *Simone Romano* 28

Laserdiscs 60 by *Tim Lucas*

The Cutting Room Floor 54 *Tim Lucas* compares MCA Universal's new *EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN* laserdisc with Universal's syndicated TV prints—and there's no comparison!

Biblio Watchdog 74 Rudolph Grey's *NIGHTMARE OF ECSTASY* reviewed by *Tim Lucas*.

KENNEL

LUCAS BALBO has prepared a definitive filmography, interview, and many reviews for **OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO**, an English-language book that will soon be published by Videodröm in Berlin, Germany.

PETER BLUMENSTOCK edited the one-shot German horrorzine **CALIGARI**, and is now writing for **SPLATTING IMAGE**. He interviewed Howard Vernon, William Berger, and Erwin C. Dietrich for the forthcoming book **OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO**.

JOHN CHARLES reviews **TOKYO DECADENCE**, **KILLER SNAKES**, **ANGEL FORCE** and **TOUCH AND GO** in future issues of **ASIAN TRASH CINEMA**.

DAVID DEL VALLE is currently seeking a publisher for **THE ART OF THE HORROR FILM**, a coffee table book composed of the most exquisite stills from his Del Valle Archives.

G. MICHAEL DOBBS recently finished editing a special Ray Harryhausen issue of **ANIMATO!**, and is now starting work on an issue celebrating Popeye's 60th Anniversary in animation.

TIM LUCAS lives inside a giant bell that is rung periodically by people with telephones all over the world.

GREGORY MANK is the author of **IT'S ALIVE**, **KARLOFF AND LUGOSI**, and **THE HOLLYWOOD HISSABLES**. His next book, **HOLLYWOOD CAULDRON: 13 CLASSIC HORROR FILMS**, is due from McFarland & Co. later this year.

SIMONE ROMANO is a regular contributor to **EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA** and **CINEMA ZERO**. He is now back at work on his projected Euro trash celebrity directory.

ERIK SULEV will have reviews in both **EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA** and **ASIAN TRASH CINEMA**, when they resurface next year.

VW THANKS:

Amy Alter & Associates (Jill Goldstein), Cathy Atwood, Eric Caidin, Cine-Zine-Zone (Pierre Charles), Columbia Tristar Home Video, Connoisseur Home Video (Peter Kleiner), Joe DeChick (Cincinnati Enquirer), Scott Eyman (The Palm Beach Post), FoxVideo (Lewis Lagrone), Steve Green (The Darkside), John Gullidge (Samhain), Eric Hoffman, Image Entertainment (Garrett Lee), Bill Kelley (Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel), Charles Kilgore, Kino on Video (Lawrence Lerman), Dick Klemensen, Craig Ledbetter, Michael Lennick, Don May, MCA Universal Home Video (Maria LaMagra, Mark Simpson), Milestone Film & Video (Dennis Doros, Amy Heller), MPI Home Video (Matthew White), New Line Home Video (Tom O'Haver), Sinister Cinema (Greg Luce), Something Weird Video (Mike Vraney), Jeff Smith, Alan Upchurch, Video Search of Miami, The Voyager Company (Elizabeth Collumb, Wendy Dwyer), Tom Weisser... our contributors, distributors, subscribers, correspondents, and everyone who's bought **THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK!**

PHOTO CREDITS:

Peter Blumenstock Collection (27), CBS/Fox Home Video (6, 19, 53), Columbia Tristar/New Line Home Video (13), Connoisseur Home Video (10b), Dan Curtis Productions (11), Del Valle Archives (front, inside, 30-39, 43-47, 50, 52, 60 ©20th Century Fox, 4 ©Filmgroup, 14, 63, 72 ©Universal, 68 ©MGM/UA), FoxVideo (22, 69, 77), Eric Hoffman Collection (15-16, 75), Bill Kelley Collection (54-59 ©Universal), Craig Ledbetter Collection (25), Gregory Mank Collection (40, 42 ©20th Century Fox), Milestone Film & Video (12), Sinister Cinema (17), Something Weird Home Video (18), Erik Sulev Collection (23), Alan Upchurch Collection (28 ©New World Pictures), Warner Home Video (9, 10a, back ©DC Comics Inc.). **LOGO AND COVER DESIGN:** Radomir Perica (International Design Studio, Washington DC).

VIDEO WATCHDOG® is published bimonthly by Tim & Donna Lucas (P.O. Box 5283, Cincinnati, OH 45205-0283).

VIDEO WATCHDOG® Number 15 is copyright 1993 by Tim & Donna Lucas. All rights reserved. All featured articles and illustrations are copyright 1993 by their respective writers and artists. Reproduction of any material in part or in whole without its creator's permission is strictly forbidden. VIDEO WATCHDOG® accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, videocassettes, stills, art or other materials. News items are welcome; however, more ambitious contributions are accepted on an invitational basis only. VIDEO WATCHDOG® is a registered trademark of Tim Lucas. SUBSCRIPTIONS: One Year (6 issues) USA Bulk Mail \$24 / USA First Class Mail \$35. OUTSIDE USA Surface Mail \$33/ OUTSIDE USA Air Mail \$45, in USA funds only. VISA/MasterCard orders accepted by mail or phone: (513) 471-8989.

THE WATCHDOG BARKS



WITH THIS ISSUE, VIDEO WATCHDOG swells to 80 pages. I doubt that you're complaining, but this size increase does invite an explanation.

Donna and I have always taken great pride in delivering, on a strict bimonthly schedule, the most informative fantasy film journal around. That's no boast; it's a simple statement of fact, because VIDEO WATCHDOG is also the only magazine of its kind that deliberately excludes the padding of outside advertising. Despite this generous credo, we have been forced to see, again and again, that 64 pages of uninterrupted, minuscule type *still* isn't enough for VW to be all that it can and should be. Attentive readers may have noticed that regular columns like "The Cutting Room Floor" and "Biblio Watchdog" have become more irregular since the expansion of our laser coverage some issues ago. It's not that we haven't had material, but that we haven't had room to print it! In recent months, there has also been a noticeable increase in the volume of fantasy-related product on video—not only from major companies, but also from a rising number of earnest and reliable mail-order services. Gone is the time when the USA branch of our "Video Around the World" section could get away with reviewing 10 or fewer titles. With these problems in mind, and since rising production costs were going to force a raise in our cover price anyway, we've decided to soften that blow by raising our page count in the same stroke.

Guess what? The increased page count really didn't make much of a difference to this issue, after all! "Biblio Watchdog" just made it in by the skin of its teeth, and "The Cutting Room Floor" consists of only one major article,

devoted to MCA Universal's **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN**... well, *two*, if you count the lead "Watchdog News" item about TNT's unwitting restoration of Roger Corman's **THE WASP WOMAN**. (Please count it.) If all goes well, we'll soon learn to accept our limitations, and these beloved departments will appear in future issues with greater consistency.

So pour yourself a deeper cup of your favorite beverage and find yourself a more comfortable chair because, from now on, reading VIDEO WATCHDOG will be less like a jog and more like a marathon!

• • •

In this 15th issue of VIDEO WATCHDOG, Greg Mank marks his first VW appearance with a remarkable production history of John Brahm's "Jack the Ripper" classic **THE LODGER** (1944), starring the late, great Laird Cregar. **THE LODGER** isn't available yet on home video, but FoxVideo tells us that it (and its haunting companion piece **HANGOVER SQUARE**) ranks among their most requested titles ever, and that a video release for both may be imminent. Both movies have been shown on Cinemax within the past year but, more importantly, these films—not to mention their virtually forgotten director and tragic star—truly warrant and reward remembrance. And so, as we did with our previous Curtis Harrington issue, VIDEO WATCHDOG opts to set trends rather than follow them. Greg's equally impressive production history of **HANGOVER SQUARE** will follow in our next issue.

This issue is dedicated to Jess Franco—who, during a recent gathering with old colleagues in an apartment in Paris, was seen to bow on one knee when the name of John Brahm was mentioned.

• • • • • Tim Lucas

WATCHDOG NEWS

*How To Tell Jack's **WASP**... from Roger's*



EARLY SUNDAY morning, Nov. 1, Turner Network Television (TNT) ran Roger Corman's **THE WASP WOMAN** (1958), starring Susan Cabot, Fred (Anthony) Easley, and Barboura Morris. The first film produced by The Filmgroup, Corman's short-lived independent production company, **THE WASP WOMAN** has been circulated to television stations in recent years in an Allied Artists package, syndicated by Lorimar Television. What was so unique about the TNT broadcast—besides a sparkling new Warner Bros.

syndication print—was that it marked the first time Corman's film was ever shown on television as it appeared in theaters.

When Roger Corman approached Allied Artists Television with his Filmgroup catalog in 1962, he was told that a number of titles were too short even for 90m commercial time slots. His answer to this problem was to hire directors Monte Hellman and Jack Hill to shoot new footage, to pad the movies to an acceptable length. Among the augmented titles: Hellman's own **BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE**, and Corman's **SKI TROOP ATTACK, THE LAST**

WOMAN ON EARTH (a color film released to TV in B&W to disguise the B&W pickup scenes), and **THE WASP WOMAN**. Apparently, what '60s TV found unacceptable looks just fine to today's superstations.

In the case of **THE WASP WOMAN**, it's a pleasure after so many years to see Corman's film in its original 66m fighting trim. Despite Cabot's threadbare monster makeup, the movie itself is a model of compact, energetic filmmaking—a quality difficult to

*Susan Cabot in **THE WASP WOMAN**, directed by the King of the B's, Roger Corman.*

discern from the top-heavy 77m version that has circulated in its stead for the past 30 years.

The old Allied Artists TV version opens with a 9m 3s prologue directed by Jack Hill. The prologue commences with the eccentric Dr. Zinthrop (Michael Mark, reprising his role from Corman's original film), in protective clothing, collecting a wasp's nest from a high branch. After placing the nest inside a special container, he walks down a dirt road toward a bee ranch. Zinthrop meets Harvey, a hooded beekeeper, and proudly displays the nest.

HARVEY:

Wasps! Better be careful! They can sting a man to death!

ZINTHROP:

Don't worry. We understand each other. They know who their friend is!

HARVEY:

Yeah, but they know when you ain't, too!

The scene cuts to another area of the ranch, as a Thunderbird hatchback pulls up. Visiting the ranch is Mr. Barker (Carl Schanzer), an executive of Holliday Honey. Barker is greeted by another hooded beekeeper, an employee named Renfrow (Aron Kincaid). Barker congratulates Renfrow on a successful month.

RENFROW:

Well, I try to do my best, Mr. Barker. I try to take my inspiration from the bees. Always busy, busy, busy!

Barker inquires about Renfrow's co-worker, Dr. Eric Zinthrop.

RENFROW:

Zinthrop! Boy, there's a nut! Him and the bees! Y'know, it wouldn't surprise me someday to see him flappin' his arms and takin' off after some Queen bee with the rest of the drones!

Barker explains that Zinthrop has been paid to research Royal Jelly for health food and cosmetic purposes, but that he hasn't received a program report in over a month. Together, Renfrow and Barker decide to pay a visit to the good doctor at the ranch's extractor.

Barker is angered to find Zinthrop ignoring his paid research in favor of the study of wasps. Zinthrop maintains that he is "on the verge of a great discovery." He shows two dogs to his visitors, one mature and the other a puppy—"yet they are exactly the same age," he maintains, explaining that the younger-looking dog was given rejuvenating injections of wasp enzymes. Barker doubts this explanation and promptly fires Zinthrop for not being "one of the team." When Barker and Renfrow leave, a shaken Zinthrop quietly rejoins his wasp colony, feeds it a caterpillar and promises them, "We shall find a home somewhere." At this point, the Allied Artists version dissolves to the first scene of Corman's original film, the meeting of the Board of Directors of Janice Starlin Cosmetics—which will soon become Zinthrop's new "home."

Halfway through the film, another 2m sequence directed by Hill appears. When Zinthrop disappears from the office after being struck by a car and hospitalized, Janice Starlin (Susan Cabot) contacts Detective Hellman (Frank Gerstle) to find him. Shortly after Hellman telephones a colleague named "Jerry" and puts him on the case, the scene cuts to silent footage of a young man seated behind a desk—presumably Jerry—*played by Jack Hill himself!* In silent footage, scored with **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS** outtakes by Fred Katz, Jerry finishes talking on the phone, hangs up, and exits the room. The shot then dissolves to Jerry being driven around Los Angeles, where he shows a large

photograph—presumably of Zinthrop—to various pedestrians, including a girl sitting at a root beer stand. After taking the photo into a downtown hospital, we see Jerry placing a call at an outside pay phone. The shot cuts directly to the Corman footage, as the phone in Janice's office rings with word of Zinthrop's hospitalization.

Hill's footage (11m 3s in all) adds nothing of narrative interest to **THE WASP WOMAN**, but it does have a modest historic value for horror completists. Not only is Hill's participation in the film's post-production life an interesting detail, but so are the uncredited appearances of Carl Schanzer and Aron Kincaid. Schanzer had featured roles in Hill's **BLOOD BATH** and **SPIDER BABY** (not to mention the "hunting decapitation" scene Hill added to **DEMENTIA 13**), but most filmographies place Kincaid's earliest genre appearance three years later, in **DR. GOLDFOOT AND THE BIKINI MACHINE** (1965).

There's no question which version of **THE WASP WOMAN** is superior, but the renewed availability of Corman's original cut would seem to endanger the availability of its expanded TV version, which has also earned a right to exist. Fortunately, the expanded TV versions of **THE WASP WOMAN**, **THE LAST WOMAN ON EARTH**, **SKI TROOP ATTACK**, and **BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE** can be obtained from Sinister Cinema for \$19.00 ppd.

Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlie

CBS/Fox Video has announced **CHAPLIN: A LEGACY OF LAUGHTER**, a ten-volume series that will restore, reissue, and supplement the major films of Charlie Chaplin on laserdisc. The series will be digitally remastered from original negatives and fine-grain prints, never before transferred to video,

which Fox has obtained directly from the Roy Export Company Establishment, Chaplin's film distribution organization. In the end, these films will be made available to the public not only in near-mint condition but also, for the first time, at their correct projection speeds and frame apertures. Each two-disc set will be packaged in an informative gatefold jacket, featuring rare photographs and memorabilia, and an innovative "Chapter and Verse" guide indexing each title by chapter, time code, and frame number. Each title will be priced at \$69.98.

The series—which commenced last November with a remarkable CAV pressing of **MODERN TIMES**—will also make extensive use of never-before-released film materials and production documents from Chaplin's personal archives in Vevey, Switzerland. The supplementary materials to **MODERN TIMES**, for example, include the daily production logs of the filming of the famous "trapped in the gears" sequence, illustrating how Chaplin would shoot, view, cut, and then reshoot the sequence until it was exactly as he wanted it. The remaining titles in the first grouping are **CITY LIGHTS** (CAV), **THE GREAT DICTATOR** (last side CAV), **MONSIEUR VERDOUX** and, combined on a single CAV disc, **THE KID** and **A DOG'S LIFE**.

The second grouping will consist of **THE CIRCUS** (CAV), **LIME-LIGHT** (last side CAV), **THE GOLD RUSH** (CAV), a combination set of **A KING IN NEW YORK** and **WOMAN OF PARIS**, and an omnibus set containing the shorts **THE IDLE CLASS**, **SUNNYSIDE**, **PAY-DAY**, **THE PILGRIM**, **SHOULDER ARMS**, and **A DAY'S PLEASURE**. The entire series of 16 films—covering Chaplin's First National (1918-23) and United Artists (1923-52) years—is expected to be fully available by the second quarter of 1993.



Charlie during the production of *A COMEDY OF MURDERS*, later retitled *MONSIEUR VERDOUX*. To his left are his assistants Robert Florey and Wheeler Dryden (the father of Jefferson Airplane's Spencer Dryden).

And Now a Word from Our Genre

If you love obscure European horror and exploitation movies—the kind that were never dubbed into English or released in this country—but are physically unable to watch an imported foreign-language tape without understanding the dialogue, your tonic has arrived.

Video Search of Miami, an exclusive mail-order service mentioned in last issue's Watchdog News, is taking its members' appreciation of their favorite films on a quantum leap with an exclusive line of English-subtitled cassettes.

Transferred from the finest international sources available, the tapes are being made available to anyone holding membership in VSoM, which can be obtained for a simple \$10 enrollment fee. Among the first movies to be subtitled by VSoM are Paul Naschy's **HOWL OF THE DEVIL** [*El Aullido del Diablo*, 1987], with Naschy (as 9 classic monsters), Howard Vernon, and Caroline Munro; Pupi Avati's terrifying **THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH** [*La Casa dalle finestre che ridono*, 1976]; Riccardo Freda's seldom-seen **TRAGIC CEREMONY AT VILLA ALEXANDER** [*Tragica Ceremonia en Villa Alexander*,

1973]; Jorge Grau's powerful rape/revenge drama, **CODE OF HUNTING** [*Coto de Caza*]; and numerous films by the French director Jean Rollin, including **THE NUDE VAMPIRE** [*La Vampire Nue*, 1969], **BLOODY LIPS** [*Levres du Sang*, 1974], **THE GRAPES OF DEATH** [*Les Raisins de la Mort*, 1978], **NIGHT OF THE HUNTED** [*La Nuit du Traquées*, 1980], and **THE LIVING DEAD GIRL** [*La Morte Vivant*, 1982].

One of Video Search's special missions is the subtitled of Jess Franco's prolific career. Already available are **THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF** [*Grilos en la Noche*, 1962], **DE SADE '70** [*Eugenie de Sade*, 1970], **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN** [*La Maldición de Frankenstein*, 1972—8m longer than Britain's Go Video release], **LADY PORNO** [*Porno Dama*, 1975], **THE WICKED MEMOIRS OF EUGENIE** [*Eugenie*, 1980—not to be confused with 1970's **EUGENIE, THE STORY OF HER JOURNEY INTO PERVERSION**], **MACUMBA SEXUAL** (1980), and **El Hotel de los Ligos** (1981).

What's most exciting about this undertaking is that it shows a respect for these films that the commercial cinema could seldom muster, even for the best of them. The use of subtitles allows the dignity of the original performances to be maintained—not ridiculed, as so often happens with careless English dubbing. You get all the nuance and none of the condescension. In many cases, VSoM offers the original continental versions of these films, which include additional footage of an erotic or violent nature; **THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF**, for instance, includes two instances of female nudity never included in the original domestic release. Of course, the image quality varies from tape to tape, but is generally about three generations away from the master

recording—in other words, soft but quite watchable.

The cost is \$25 per tape, plus \$2.90 shipping charges (with \$1 more for each additional title). International shipping is \$5 for the first title, and another \$4 for each additional tape.

A Tape Worth Clamoring For

The estimable Charles Killgore, editor of the award-winning fanzine ECCO, enters the home video business with **GRINDHOUSE HORRORS**, a mind-boggling 100m collection of trailers from the days when words like *unusual*, *shocking*, and *sadistic* were gleefully employed to sell low-budget junk to a gleefully sick public. The tape's highlights include the monoid **JOURNEY INTO THE BEYOND**, narrated by John Carradine; **THE VIRGIN WITCH** ("A pagan rite becomes the ultimate freak-out!"); **CHINESE HERCULES**; **FEARLESS FIGHTERS** (this one is so long, it must contain all of the movie's Kung Fu footage); **CULT OF THE DAMNED** (hear Jennifer Jones say, "In the heart of my hearts, I'm a sexual clam!"); and a letterboxed spot for Dario Argento's **DEEP RED**. Mastered from 35mm originals, **GRINDHOUSE HORRORS** is available for \$21.95 postpaid from Killgore Productions, PO Box 65742, Washington DC 20035. And yes, Jennifer, it comes in a plastic clamshell box!

Retitlings

BLOOD RECKONING (VEC) is **THE SQUEEZE** (1976), directed by Anthony M. Dawson (aka Antonio Margheriti) and starring Yul Brynner and Barbara Bouchet. It was released

by VidAmerica and Pan-Canadian Video as **DEATH RAGE**.

THE NEW BARBARIANS (Impulse) is Enzo G. Castellari's **WARRIORS OF THE WASTELAND** (1983), a dismal **ROAD WARRIOR** ripoff starring Timothy Brent (aka Giancarlo Prete) and Fred Williamson that reared its ugly head on Thorn-EMI Video.

OPERATION: OVERTHROW (On-Line) is Martyn Burke's **POWER PLAY** (1978), a British/Canadian thriller starring Peter O'Toole and Donald Pleasance that was released by Media. It has also surfaced as **A STATE OF SHOCK** (Astral).

SPIDER'S VENOM (Lettuce) is Peter Sykes' **THE LEGEND OF SPIDERFOREST** (1976), originally released by Media. It occasionally pops up on Canadian TV as **VENOM** (not to be confused with the 1982 Piers Haggard film, starring Oliver Reed and Klaus Kinski).

VICE WARS (Prestige Productions) is Hector Olivera's **COCAINE WARS** (1986), a Concorde clunker starring John Schneider that was originally released by Media.

WALK OF THE DEAD (Vogue) is the early '80s reissue version of Leon Klimovsky's **VENGEANCE OF THE ZOMBIES** (1972), starring Paul Naschy, which was released by All Seasons Entertainment. The revamped edition features a ridiculous "Shock Notice" gimmick that is supposed to warn viewers when something gory is about to happen—but the warning is spliced in *after* the shocks! The All Seasons tape (out of print) is superior in all respects.

—John Charles 🐾



Video Around the World

USA

By Tim Lucas

Rod, Tod, and Mad Doctors Playing God

THE ADULT VERSION OF JEKYLL & HIDE

1972, *Something Weird Video*,
\$23.00 ppd., 91m 10s

In 1971, Christopher Lee starred in **I, MONSTER**, an unofficial adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous tale, **THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE**, and Roy Ward Baker's **DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE** presented the screen's first sexual transformation. This low-budget effort, filmed the following year, finds the swarthy Dr. Christopher Leader (!—played by Jack Buddliner) unearthing the diary of Dr. Jekyll in an antique bookstore and using it to concoct a potion that transforms him into a leggy blonde (Jane Tsentas) who delights in torturing and murdering her sex partners. The couplings (which include future porn star Rene Bond) are presented with minimal appeal and culminate in some surprisingly rough sadism; in two Victorian flashbacks, we see the original Mr. Hyde cauterize a streetwalker's vagina with a red-hot poker after intercourse and crush another's head with a paperweight, while Miss

Hide actually slices a sailor's hard-on off. The horror scenes aren't too bad for this kind of thing, but their appeal is limited by Miss Hide's embodiment of a maniacally selfish machismo bent on insulting and destroying the sexual needs of women. The violence of the film is not as offensive as its suggestion that trying to communicate with women on any level is tantamount to losing one's balls. The film was written by its director of photography, Robert Birch. According to David F. Friedman, the pseudonymous director "L. Ray Monde" was actually Lee Raymond and Byron Mabe (who also produced as "L. Ron Elliott").

A NOTE ON TIMINGS

The timings listed for the following NTSC tapes reflect only the length of the film itself, and do not include such ephemera as video company logos, FBI warnings, supplementary trailers, or MPAA ratings certificates. The only exceptions to this rule are those films in which the soundtrack is first heard while the distributor's logo is still onscreen.

KEY

CC	Closed Captioned
D	Digital
HF	Hi-Fi
LB	Letterboxed
LD	Laserdisc
MA	Multiple Audio
NSR	No Suggested Retail
OP	Out of Print
S	Stereo
SS	Surround Sound



Crimebuster Keaton in *BATMAN RETURNS*.

AROUND THE WORLD WITH FANNY HILL

1973, Kit Parker Video DF69, HF, \$29.95, 93m 54s

Despite its title and Mac Ahlberg's direction, this "Dave Friedman Video" presentation has no relation to Ahlberg's **FANNY HILL** (1968). It's actually an imaginative, highly amusing sex-comedy about the ignored wife (Shirley Corrigan) of a director of TV commercials who, after leaving her husband (Peter Bonke), stumbles into an overnight success as a softcore movie star. The nudity is decorous and humorous, never lascivious, and a number of right-on satirical stabs are made at the expense of the film businesses of several nations. Clever situations, loony characters, and beautiful scenery (Sweden, Hong Kong, Venice, and Munich) abound, and the *denouement* ventures some nicely upbeat comments about the

wisdom of maintaining relationships by pooling one's creative—as well as romantic—resources. The supporting cast includes Gaby Fuchs (**MARK OF THE DEVIL**) and Christina Lindberg (**THEY CALL HER ONE-EYE**), and the attractive photography is the work of then-fledgling Mikael Salomon, who more recently lensed **THE ABYSS** and **THELMA AND LOUISE**. The running time includes a generous length of exit music.

BATMAN RETURNS

1992, Warner Home Video 15000, D/S/SS/CC, \$24.95 (VHS), \$39.95 (LD), 126m 11s

...but he (Michael Keaton) is largely consigned to the sidelines in this overcrowded scenario, which includes the plot of pathological philanthropist Max Schreck (Christopher Walken) to drain Gotham City's power supply; his attempted murder of secretary Selina Kyle

(Michelle Pfeiffer), who is reborn as Catwoman; the discovery of a sewer-dwelling "Penguin Man" (Danny De Vito) who surfaces to blackmail Schreck, who subsequently runs him for Mayor; Bruce Wayne's star-crossed romantic entanglement with Selina; the Penguin's plan to abduct and drown all the first-born children of Gotham City; and, well, much else besides. Tim Burton's sequel is awash in grandiosity, like its predecessor, but manages to avoid drowning in it, thanks to some happily-downscaled art direction (Wayne Manor consists only of an interior room and an exterior matte painting!), intoxicating photography, marvelous miniatures, and the flamboyant performances of its "super-freaks." (Fans of Robert Altman's **TANNER '88** series will be delighted to see Michael Murphy cast, this time around, as Gotham's Mayor.) That's the good side; on the other hand, Burton's ersatz



TM & © DC Comics Inc.

The Penguin (Danny De Vito) and Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer) plan to commit a merger in BATMAN RETURNS.

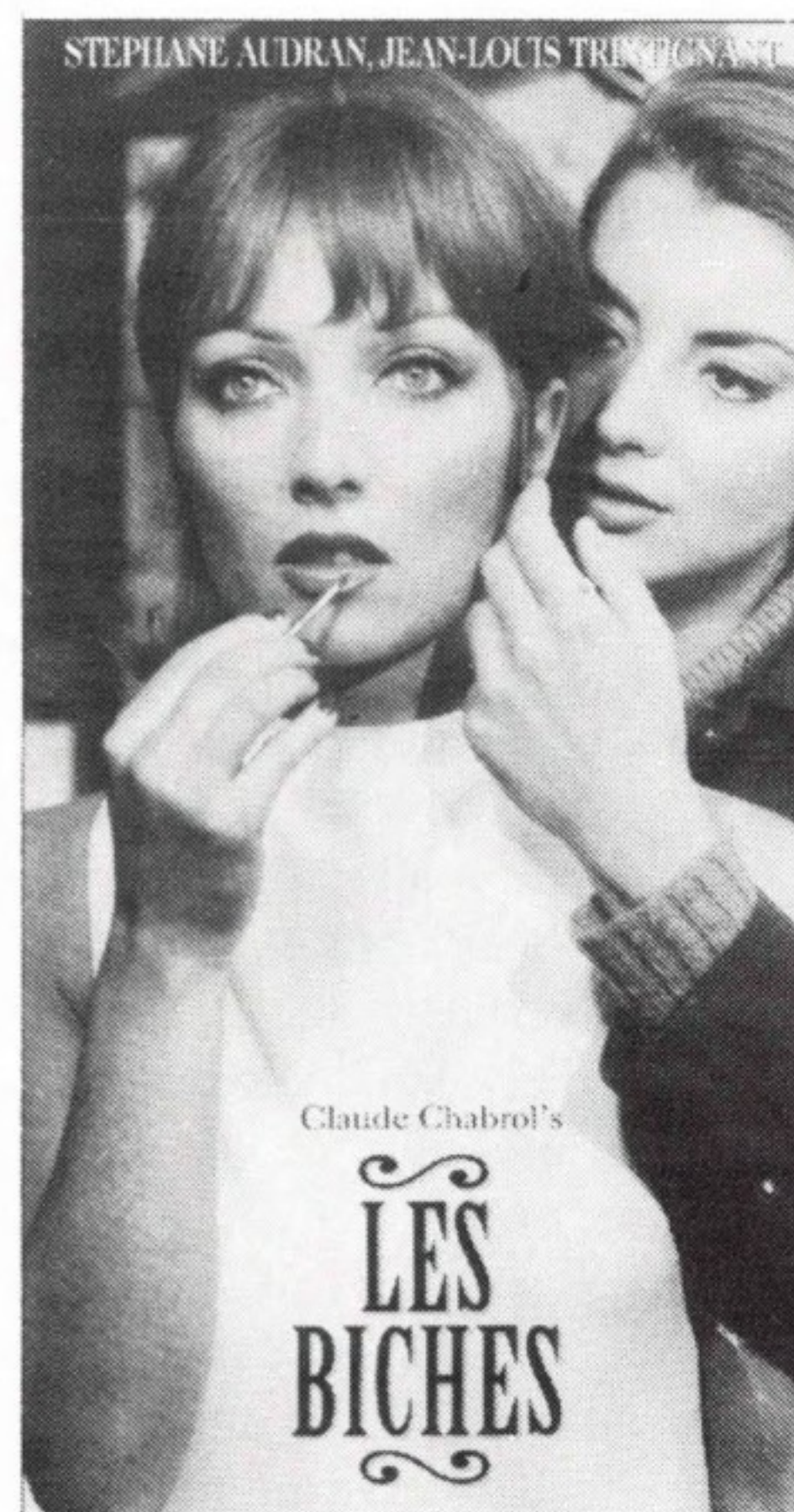
Edward Gorey act is becoming awfully tiresome, and this film's wholesale borrowing of the ultra-blue, super-snowy look of **EDWARD SCISSORHANDS** indicates that he's reached the narcissism stage of success without having achieved an identity that's wholly his own. It's not the many visual references to silent melodrama (**CALIGARI**, Max Schreck, **LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT**, etc.) that are annoying—after all, Roland West's **THE BAT** (1926) inspired Bob Kane's “original” concept—but the fact that Burton invokes them so casually, in ways that tell us nothing about him or his summoned sources. The VHS “full screen” cropping of the original 1.85:1 ratio is somewhat interfering; the convergence of penguins greeting baby Oswald's Moses-like crib, the POV shot of the Penguin's flippers on the bars of the sewer grating—depending on the over-

scan of your set, the full impact of these important early touches may or may not be as delectable or detectable as they should be. Also available on laserdisc in a 1.95:1 letterboxed transfer, spread over three sides, the last of which is in CAV. On both tape and disc, the digital surround sound is exciting and powerful, delivering Danny Elfman's enchanting score and an aural encyclopedia of explosive techno-gadgetry with something like Wagnerian majesty.

LES BICHES

1968, *Connoisseur Video*, HF/LB, \$79.95, 94m 18s

This Claude Chabrol thriller, almost too gentle to earn the definition, resembles a more elliptically-told **SINGLE WHITE FEMALE**. A starving artist named Why (Jacqueline Sassard) is picked up by Frederique (Stephane Audran),



a wealthy single woman with vaguely lesbian intentions, which dissipate after a party where the

virginal—and hence ambivalent—Why is attracted to Paul (Jean-Louis Trintignant), a handsome young architect. Why spends the night chastely with Paul, after which Frederique steps in to seduce him herself. When Why fails at every attempt to maintain her relationship with the new couple—including an attempted *ménage à trois*—she seeks accommodation in the only way left to her, by “becoming” Frederique. Very little of noticeable significance occurs in the film’s first half, which chronicles the strange hangers-on and unhealthy atmosphere at Frederique’s St. Tropez villa; in retrospect, the point seems to be Why’s increasing comfort in these conditions—that is, what she is willing to become in order to survive. After the introduction of Paul, the film is about *who* she is willing to become to have her *feelings* survive. In the hands of any other director, Why’s corrosion into a jealous, psychotic monster would have been portrayed with much broader strokes; Chabrol conveys her transformation with cool calculation, as if presenting the time-lapsed document of a deadly nightshade in bloom. The casting of Sassard—the ice princess of Joseph Losey’s **ACCIDENT** (1967)—in this key role is fortuitous indeed. Not for impatient viewers, but gratifying as a completed experience; the title translates as “The Darlings.” Letterboxed at approximately 1.90:1, the film is also available on laser-disc from Lumivision (LVD9228, \$34.98).

THE BLOODY BROOD

1959, *Sinister Cinema JS23*, \$19.00 ppd., 68m 31s

Leopold & Loeb meet Jack Kerouac in this stylish, offbeat film about an ambitious drug dealer (Peter Falk) on the coffee house circuit, who lures one of his beatnik customers—a snide director of TV



Nigel Davenport and Simon Ward have crosses to bear with Count Jackula (Drac Palance) in **BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA**.

commercials (Ronald Hartman)—into assisting him in the “ultimate intellectual game”: *murder*. After feeding a ground-glass hamburger to an innocent messenger boy, Falk and Hartman are sought by the victim’s square but vengeful brother (Jack Betts). This Canadian production was filmed in Toronto by Julian Roffman, who later helmed the bizarre 3-D fantasy **THE MASK** (aka **EYES OF HELL**, 1961). Roffman’s direction is creatively supported by the legendary cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan, whose next assignment was Georges Franju’s **EYES WITHOUT A FACE** [*Les Yeux sans Visage*, 1959]. The film captures its *milieu* with reasonable success, features some fervid supporting performances, and it’s all over well before we start shifting in our seats. Falk gives a surprisingly confident star performance in this, his second film (following a bit part in Nicholas Ray’s **WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES**, 1958). No complaints, but one question: Did it really take four people to write this?

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

1973, MPI Home Video MP-6353, HF, \$59.98, 97m 35s

This is Dan Curtis’ Made-for-TV version of the oft-told tale—originally available with Elvira wraparounds from Thrillervideo, now reissued as part of “The Curtis Signature Collection.” Scripted by Richard Matheson, this telling was the first to explicitly connect the historic figure of Vlad Tepes with the fictional Count Dracula, and to explain Dracula’s attraction to Lucy with allusions to a look-alike he loved during his natural lifetime. (Francis Ford Coppola’s recent version, which has the same title, owes far more to Matheson’s treatment than to Stoker’s novel.) Despite Stoker’s possessory credit, this romanticized approach has nothing to do with the novel and makes its villain sympathetic to the point where he ceases to be effective; it doesn’t help that the role is played by a sorely miscast Jack Palance (the only time the undead aristocrat has been played

by an actor with a broken boxer's nose). As with most films based on this material, there are moments uniquely successful to this version that make the entire production worth one's time; in this case, the scene where Dracula forces Minna (Penelope Horner) to drink from a thumbnail incision in his chest is especially well-done, as is a surprise attack on Arthur Holmwood (Simon Ward) by a ferocious wolf. The cast is competent but unspecial, and includes many familiar faces from the British genre scene of the day—Fiona Lewis, George Pravda, Virginia Wetherell, Sarah Douglas, and Murray Brown (the hapless hitchhiker of Joseph Larraz' **VAMPYRES**, 1973). In a sense, the star of the film is Oswald Morris, whose lush cinematography of the British and Yugoslavian locations give this film a visual pedigree that Curtis' subsequent horror projects never again achieved. MPI's transfer is better-looking (and better packaged) than the old Thrillervideo release, but Jonathan Harker's midnight arrival at Castle Dracula, shot day-for-night, occurs here in broad daylight! The film is followed by approximately 4m of Curtis-related promos.

CHANG

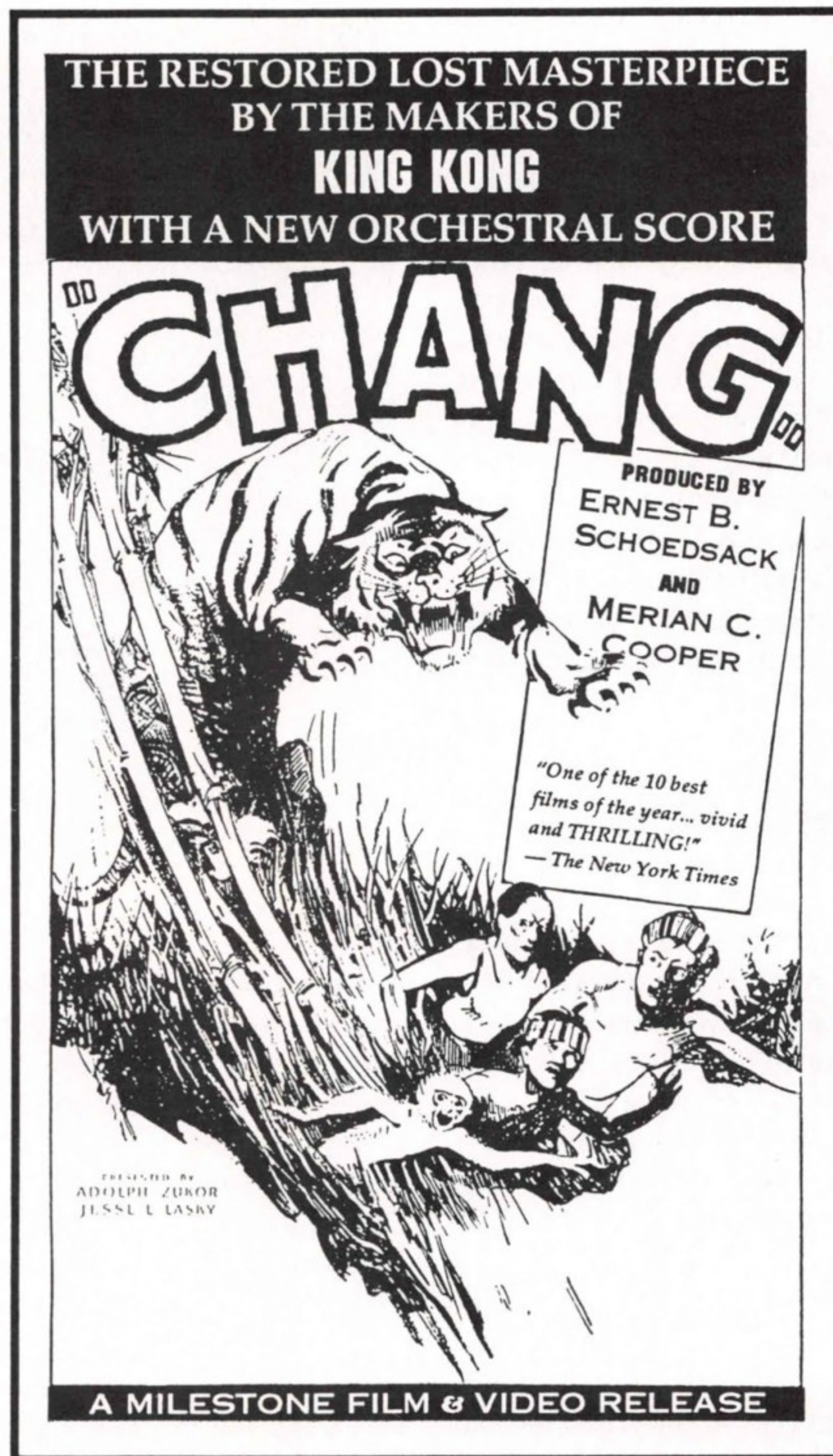
1927, Milestone Film & Video, HF/S, \$39.95, 68m 46s

Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's follow-up to their extraordinary 1925 Persian documentary **GRASS** [VW 13:12] is made available here for the first time in over 45 years. Truly the missing link between **GRASS** and **KING KONG** (1933), **CHANG** is a pioneering example of the "docu-drama," telling the story of the natural joys and traumas experienced by a Siamese farming couple and their two children. The most joyous scenes—like the family's discovery of a baby elephant—are

too spontaneous to have been planned, while such highlights as the subsequent destruction of their stilt-legged hut by an angry mother elephant are too well covered by Schoedsack's camera crew to have not been helped along. In a very short amount of screen time, this film brings us extraordinarily close to its cast of characters, a designation which by no means excludes its animal participants, whose personalities, goals, and feelings are defined with never less than equal nobility. Milestone has given this gem the special setting it deserves, with a beautifully restored print,

windowboxed title cards, and a stereophonic score of great and unusual presence (it intrigued our cats!) written by Bangkok composer Bruce Gaston and performed by Fong Naam. The given running time reflects Milestone's overall presentation; the running time of the actual film footage is 67m 1s.

CHANG is one of four new releases in Milestone's ongoing "Age of Exploration" series, which now also includes Martin and Osa Johnson's African travelogue **SIMBA** (1928); H.P. Carver's **THE SILENT ENEMY** (1930), an awesome



reconstruction of 17th Century Ojibway Indian life; and the fascinating documentary **WITH BYRD AT THE SOUTH POLE**, which won the 1930 Academy Award for Best Cinematography.

EDWARD II

1991, New Line/Columbia/TriStar
75603, D/S-SS, \$89.95, 90m 30s

Derek Jarman—the gifted art director of Ken Russell's **THE DEVILS** (1971) and eccentric director of such films as **JUBILEE** (1979), **THE TEMPEST** (1980), and **IN THE SHADOW OF THE SUN** (1981)—used Christopher Marlowe's 1592 play as the basis for this violent, fantasy-tinged howl of outrage against gay-bashing. Upon the death of his father, the weak-willed King Edward II (Steven Waddington) invites his "favorite" Gaveston (Andrew Tiernan) to share his kingdom, an invitation that outrages Queen Isabella (Tilda Swinton), who masterminds Gaveston's exile and eventual murder. Much like Russell's **WHORE** (1991), which pretends to be a freedom of sexual information tract while revelling in its own excesses like a kinky old uncle, Jarman's sense of burlesque often upstages his dramatic responsibilities; his direction is gaudy in a way that neither extends or supports the story, and the relationship of Edward and Gaveston is too eccentrically portrayed—with comic tangos and animal noises—to be heartfelt. As a playwright, Marlowe (who most modern Elizabethan scholars accept as homosexual) did not avoid allusions to "pretty boys" in his work, and the "howl of outrage" was his most reliable catapult to beautiful prose; but **EDWARD II**, whether the actual monarch was homosexual or not, was about the ineffectuality of a ruler whose reality is composed entirely of political relationships, who yearns for the emotional nourishment and reliability of someone



Edward (Steven Waddington) shares the throne of England with "favorite" Gaveston (Andrew Tiernan) in Derek Jarman's eccentric **EDWARD II**.

real, someone outside the realm of politics. By using Marlowe's drama to illustrate how anti-gay violence has been destroying lives since the 16th Century, Jarman and co-scenarists Stephen McBride and Ken Butler make an essential statement but do so dishonestly, depriving the play of its original point and reducing it to a point of reference at best, at worst a crutch. Far easier to accept (and just as subversive) are the inventive staging, costuming—which incorporates everything from double-breasted suits to dog collars—and bizarre scoring, that runs the gamut from Elizabethan string instruments to Annie Lennox, who drifts androgynously through the castle while lip-synching Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye." Tilda Swinton makes a strong impression as the imperious Isabella, who literally bites out the throats of her betrayers, and Nigel Terry is also excellent as her military strategist, Mortimer; their scenes together are invigorating black fun. The film is cropped from its original

1.85:1 ratio and suffers most noticeably during close-shots. The Dolby Surround mix is well-separated, but—despite the ear-to-ear trajectories of various unexplained rocket sounds and electronic zings—not particularly creative.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

1939, Kino on Video, HF,
\$24.95, 64m 28s

This Tod Slaughter barnstormer shows exactly where the British horror cinema stood in relation to American productions in the late '30s. Whereas the American horror cinema reached its first zenith of production values in 1939 with Universal's **SON OF FRANKENSTEIN**, this production—an unabashed "quota quickie"—is much more European in its approach to the genre: inexpensive, melodramatic, erotically leering, and deeply indebted to the French *Grand Guignol*. Set in 1880 Paris, it attends the efforts of the lecherous Chevalier Del Gardo



*He drives a hard bargain: Boris Karloff asks Count Dracula (John Carradine) to do his bidding in **HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN**.*

(Slaughter) to wed the unwilling daughter (Marjorie Taylor) of a failing banker, whose heart belongs instead to a teller (John Warwick) who is scandalized by Del Gardo with the blame for a theft he did not commit. While this civilized monster hunts his prey, Paris is haunted by the vicious murders of *Le Loup* ("The Wolf," Harry Terry), whose hairy drooling face appears to its victims in windows before a knife is plunged into their backs. Directed by George King—who also helmed "Cool Hand Tod's" previous successes **THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET** (1936) and **THE CRIMES OF STEPHEN HAWKE** (1937)—this film revels far more in Slaughter's villainous scenery-chewing than in the Wolf's reign of terror, but the explanation of the Wolf's murders is more than

satisfying in its sheer outrageousness. This print looks and sounds better than any we've previously seen in circulation on tape. Preceded by Ub Iwerks' Flip the Frog cartoon, "**Spooks**" (1932), which runs 8m 17s.

HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

1944, MCA Universal 80828, D, \$14.98, 70m 17s

Dr. Gustav Niemann (Boris Karloff), a disciple of Henry Frankenstein imprisoned for his blasphemous experiments, is freed from his dungeon cell by a storm and, with hunchbacked henchman Daniel (J. Carroll Naish), travels the countryside with "Lampini's Chamber of Horrors." He takes his vengeful agenda home to

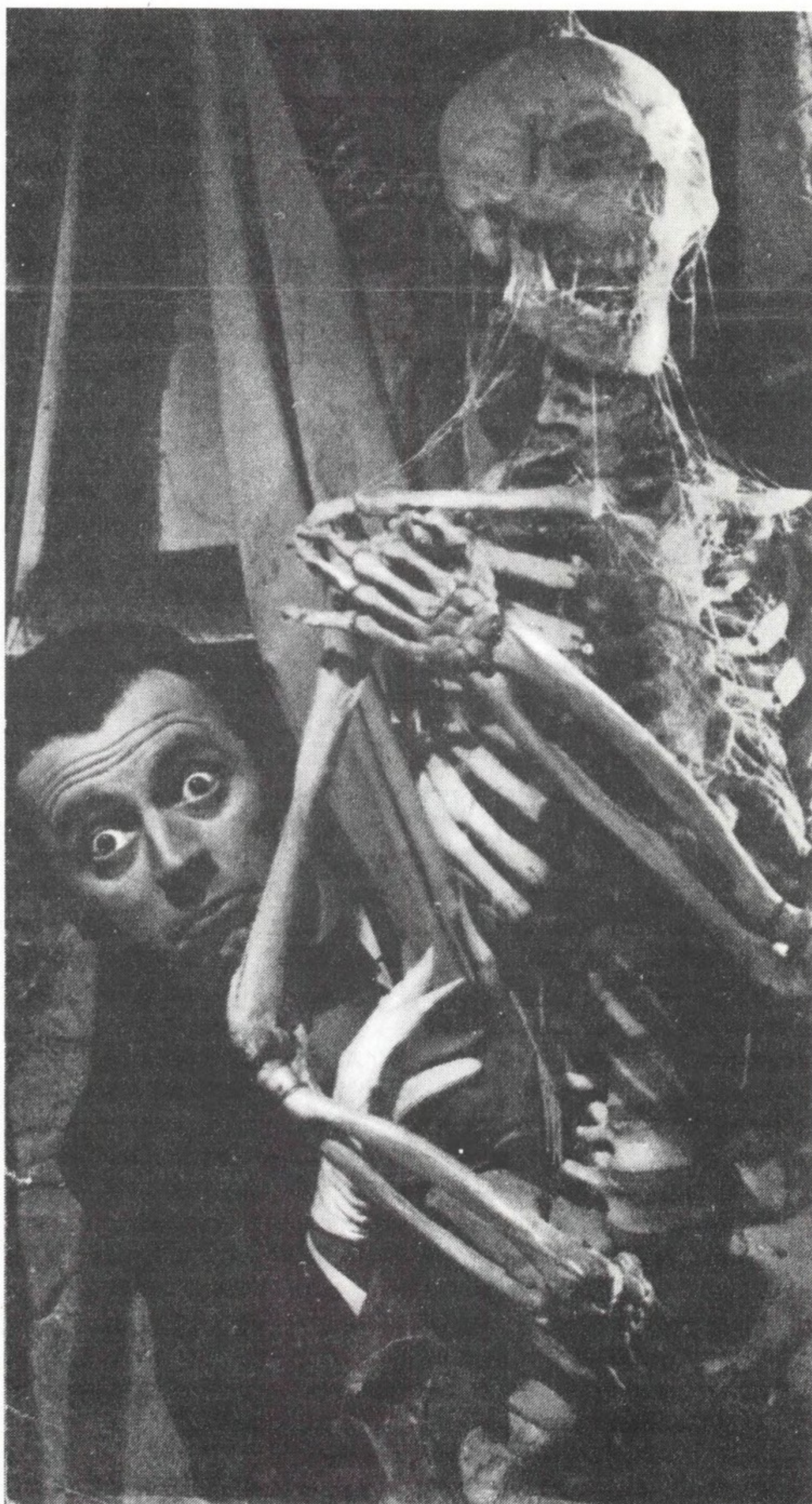
Regalburg, where he resuscitates the skeleton of Count Dracula (John Carradine) to punish the Burgomeister (Sig Rumann), and then pushes on to Visaria where the Wolfman (Lon Chaney) leads him to the remains of Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange). In recent years, it has become fashionable to downgrade this and other Universal "monster rallies" for their juvenile and serial nature, but **HOUSE** actually plays much better today than the over-rated **DRACULA'S DAUGHTER** and some of the studio's other "more respectable" achievements. Karloff and Chaney are in good form, but the crux of the film's dramatic power lies in Naish's heartfelt performance as the misshapen Daniel—who, like so many of Universal's monsters, is a sweet

soul made monstrous by the prejudices of others—and his unrequited love for the flirtatious gypsy girl (Elena Verdugo) he rescues from a whip-wielding camp leader. Carra-dine's fresh interpretation of Count Dracula (posing as "Baron Latos") is the film's most successful agent of terror; Strange's embodiment of the Monster is more physically than dramatically impressive. Based on a story by Curt Siodmak, this snappy sequel to **FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN** (MCA Universal, \$14.98) is well-directed by Erle C. Kenton (**ISLAND OF LOST SOULS**), atmospherically photographed by George Robinson (the Spanish **DRACULA**), and it features one of Hans J. Salter's most stirring, imaginative, and familiar scores. Flawed only by its sudden finale, **HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** is frightful fun of the kind they don't make anymore. Print and digital sound quality are excellent.

THE INDIAN SCARF

1963, Sinister Cinema EW08,
\$19.00 ppd., 84m 17s

This is the English-dubbed version of Alfred Vohrer's *Das Indische Tuch*, based on Edgar Wallace's *THE FRIGHTENED LADY*, which he wrote as a play, novel, and screenplay. The survivors of the late Lord Lebanon assemble at Castle Mark's Priory, where attorney Tanner (Heinz Drache) announces his late client's intention that his Will be read no sooner than the seventh morning of their stay. During that period, the guests—unexpectedly deprived of contact with the outside world by Hurricane Carla!—are individually murdered by a black-gloved strangler wielding a twirled Indian scarf. Among the pleasingly familiar cast of suspects are Klaus Kinski, as a bug-eyed, hypodermic pincushion who terrorizes women with burning cigarettes



Eddi Arent and friend in Alfred Vohrer's
Edgar Wallace krimi, *THE INDIAN SCARF*.

and a tarantula; Elizabeth Flickenschildt as the late Lord's Black Widow, Lady Lebanon; Hans Clarin as her coddled concert pianist son; Eddi Arent as Bonwit, a creepily fastidious butler; and Ady Berber

as the monstrous man-mountain "Chiko." Despite some thrilling garotting sequences, ripe with Vohrer's stylistic signature, the film is entirely composed of interior shots, and one rather misses



Inspector Wade (Joachim Fuchsberger) rescues a damsel-in-distress (Brigitte Grothum) in Alfred Vohrer's INN ON THE RIVER.

the fog-laden atmosphere that represents the Wallace *krimis* at their best. The film does have a wry sense of humor, however—that is, if you don't mind seeing inanimate objects occasionally moving of their own accord without a logical explanation! Like many of the Wallace films, this Ultrascope (2.35) production never reached American theaters and has been transferred to video from the only English source possible: a 16mm TV print with a cropped 1.33:1 ratio. The last

spoken line is a delight worth waiting for. Preceded by a trailer for Fritz Lang's **THE THOUSAND EYES OF DR. MABUSE**.

INN ON THE RIVER

1962, Sinister Cinema EW07,
\$19.00 ppd., 92m 27s

One of the best Edgar Wallace films ever! The appropriately-named Inspector Wade of Scotland Yard (Joachim Fuchsberger) is summoned to investigate the harpoon homicides of a scuba-

suiting assassin known as "The Shark." His investigation takes him to The Mekka, a riverside tavern whose virginal barmaid (Brigitte Grothum) attracts him to a second mystery, involving a criminal suitor and her sinister barkeeper guardian (Elizabeth Flickenschildt). Director Alfred Vohrer and cinematographer Karl Löb pack the film with memorable characters, impeccably staged murders, and an atmosphere thick with vice, menace, nicotine, and corrosive salty air. Martin Bottcher's wild score includes a Spike Jonesian theme song, a German ballad sung by Frau Flickenschildt in a gravelly whisper (to the roaring approval of her customers), and also a frenetic display of "twist" music. Originally titled **Das Gasthaus an der Themse** ("The Inn on the Thames"), this is a wholly captivating entry in a series that endures on the strength of its occasional wit and a few outstanding deaths. Klaus Kinski is especially good as a mysterious roomer at the Mekka who *maybe* the Shark, and Eddi Arent appears as a comic rowing enthusiast in training for the Oxford/Cambridge races. It should be noted that this is actually a fairly accurate reading—for a change!—of Wallace's 1930 novel **THE INDIA RUBBER MEN**, previously filmed by Maurice Elvey as **THE RETURN OF THE FROG** (1939). Never released to American theaters, this attractive transfer was culled from a 16mm Canadian TV print. As with **THE INDIAN SCARF**, the first murder—which unreels *before* the credits in the German version—has been placed *after* the main titles of this export version. The credits themselves have been carelessly translated: Fuchsberger and Flickenschildt's names have been simplified to "Berger" and "Flick," while cameraman Löb is credited with "sets."

THE MAD EXECUTIONERS

1963, Sinister Cinema H178,
\$19.00 ppd, 89m 19s

This is Edwin Zbonek's *Der Henker von London* ("The Hangman of London"), a first-rate CCC *krimi* purportedly based on Bryan Edgar Wallace's story WHITE CARPET. A noose used in numerous historic executions is stolen nightly from Scotland Yard's Black Museum and used by a hooded vigilante cult to hang those criminals whom the law could neither catch or punish by legal means. As Inspector Hillier (Hansjörg Felmy) investigates this case, a sex murderer (Dieter Borsche) terrorizes London, decapitating his female victims—one of whom was Hillier's own sister—for insane experimental purposes and wrapping their bodies in plastic. The two reigns of terror ultimately converge in a satisfying *homage* to Fritz Lang's *M* (1930), as one murderer is forced to defend his actions to a jury of his own criminal kind. The atmosphere is consistently eerie, thanks to Richard Angst's photography (which recalls Sidney Paget's illustrations for THE STRAND MAGAZINE) and the skulking music of Raimund Rosenberger. The solution to the mystery—seldom a source of particular delight in the *krimis*—is genuinely surprising, for a change. A blonde Maria Perschy, seen here in her first of countless European horror films, makes a captivating heroine, but Chris Howland steals the film as Gabby Pennypacker, a comic layman master of disguise. Jan Hendricks (who played so many villains in Rialto's competing Edgar Wallace *krimis*) does an uncredited turn as Joe the Knife, and Wolfgang Preiss (who played the titular villain in CCC's entire "Dr. Mabuse" series) is ironically cast as the

head of Scotland Yard! Sinister Cinema presents this 1.85:1 film in a 1.66 letterbox; there is a faintly perceptible squeeze on the image, but it's all there. The original German release is listed at 92m. Preceded by trailers for **BLACK SUNDAY** and **DEAD EYES OF LONDON**.



MONSTERS CRASH THE PAJAMA PARTY

1965, Sinister Cinema H180,
\$19.00 ppd., 31m 24s

Exactly what the title says. A group of teenage girls decide to throw a slumber party in an old, abandoned house, unaware that a Mad Doctor (Vic McGee, who also plays "Lt. Williams") plans to turn them all into gorillas! When their boyfriends descend on the house in Halloween masks for a midnight panty raid, the fun begins. The

inspiration for this hokey, tongue-in-cheek short didn't come from the pajama party fads of the 1960s, but from the Three Stooges' **SPOOK LOUDER** (1943), **IDLE ROOMERS** (1944), and **DOPEY DICKS** (1950)—those endearing romps about gorillas and brain transplants and stormy nights and bumping into monsters while hiding in the closet. Under the direction of David L. Hewitt—"The Fearless Showman" responsible for **DR. TERROR'S GALLERY OF HORRORS** (1965) and **THE MIGHTY GORGA** (1970), among others—**MONSTERS CRASH...** hasn't any of the Stooges' charm or craft, but it's a sweet-enough souvenir of a fleeting phenomenon. Intended to be shown as part of a live "Spook Show" stage act, this no-budget farce builds to a climax in which the Mad Doctor trains a ray gun on the camera that will "blast the screen right out of the theater," allowing his disfigured helpers to raid the audience for an unwilling (planted) female. The credits are spoken and detailed with humorous eccentricity ("Operator of Picture-Taking Machine: Austin McKay"), and illustrated with appropriate gags starring someone in a wretched gorilla suit. The print is scratchy in places, and the color is weak, but this film was considered either lost or imaginary until Sinister Cinema located this rare print. With James Reason, Clara Nagel, Pauline Hillkirt (as "Draculina"), and Charles Egan (as "Ygor"). Followed by a quartet of "Spook Show" trailers (one of them—announcing "Dracula in Person!"—is scored with Bernard Herrmann's music for **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**), and preceded by trailers for **LIGHTNING BOLT**, Herschell Gordon Lewis' **THE PRIME TIME**, and **GUN GIRLS**. The above running time pertains only to the featurette; the entire program runs 41m 8s.

"I'm a small town girl with big ideas — mostly about men. That's why I get in trouble. But I can handle it. You'll see how in the new movie I'm in. The title is . . . er, a bit unusual. Better phone (THEATRE — TELEPHONE) Or just come anyway. I'll try to stay out of trouble till you get here."



"Do I look young and innocent? Good. I make people think so. That's how I get everything I want. Everything. But see for yourself in the new movie I'm in. The title is a little . . . er, unusual, so call (THEATRE — TELEPHONE) Or just come anyway. I'll try to keep my innocent look till you get here."



"I'm about to shoot a man. He deserves it for what he's done to me. You'll see why in the new movie I'm in. The title? Well, it's . . . er, a bit unusual. Better call (THEATRE — TELEPHONE) Or just come anyway. I won't shoot till you get here."



"I'd like you to come see the movie I'm in, but I can't tell you the title — it's . . . well, a bit unusual. I play a young girl that no man in town can leave alone. Can you? For the title, call (THEATRE — TELEPHONE) Or come anyway. I'll be waiting."



THE SEDUCERS

THE SEDUCERS

1970, *Something Weird Video*, \$23.00 ppd., 84m

This is the domestic release version of Ottavio Alessi's Italian-German co-production **Top Sensation** aka *Sklavin ihrer Triebe* ("Slaves to their Desires"), a surprisingly wicked erotic film based

on the time-honored notion that money is the root of all evil. Mudy (Maud de Bellerocche), a wealthy oil magnate, hires an ambitious decadent couple (Maurizio Bonuglia and Rosalba Neri) and another woman (Edwige Fenech) to join her and her emotionally withdrawn, pyromaniac son Tony (Ruggero Miti) for a Mediterranean cruise on their

private yacht—with the hope that one of the women will succeed in seducing the virginal teen. (His mental state is explained as the result of being fed whiskey in his infancy to quiet his crying, during one of his mother's acid parties!) After an uneventful spell of opium-smoking, lesbian liaisons, *ménages à trois*, and dynamiting fish—during which Tony never ventures outside his cabin—the yacht runs aground on a Greek island, where Tony meets an innocent shepherdess (Ewa Thulin) with whom he can behave normally. Mudy's mob quickly descends on the girl, drugging and reinventing her into one of their own, unaware of the frightening consequences of their interference. The film contains no screenwriting credit, but this is a very skillful attempt to create a Sadean parable in a jet set *milieu*, aided in no small way by the charisma of Neri and Fenech—two great starlets of European *cinéma-bis* captured together for the only time, and in their prime. The last half hour builds to a nightmare erotic climax worthy of Jess Franco. *Something Weird's* print is scratchy in places, and the color has faded somewhat, but the film is sufficiently engrossing to make these points negligible.

SHE CAME ON THE BUS

1969, *Something Weird Video*, \$23.00 ppd., 58m 21s

A mixed gang of cruel thrill-seekers "out for innocent fun" break into a suburban home and abuse the resident woman with heroin, rape, and violence. Tired of the suburbs, they board a bus, murder its driver ("So a bus driver got killed! But he tried to stop the fun! Now there is a *new* driver... Let's see where *he* takes us..."), and turn it into a hell on wheels for two unsuspecting female passengers. This minimalist

exercise—filmed without sound, narrated with all the inflection of a 16mm instructional film for grade schoolers, and scored with the same feverish classical library tracks that stamp the works of Andy Milligan and Michael & Roberta Findlay—is a truly demonic work, whose unskilled execution makes its haunting qualities all the more peculiar and disturbing. Like **THE ADULT VERSION OF JEKYLL AND HIDE**, only much moreso, it posits the adult cinema at that stage in its history when the raincoat crowd was suffering from pre-hardcore malaise, and shocking violence was briefly considered as a viable alternative to graphic penetration. Historically, this film heralds the fork in the road that led adult filmmakers like Wes Craven and Sean Cunningham to break taboos of a not-altogether different kind in movies like **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** (1971). Something Weird's print is not in good shape; most of the main titles are missing, except those for producer Peter Jackson and director Harry Vincent. (Something Weird's catalogue lists Curt Ledyer as director.) The film ends as abruptly as it begins, but these faults serve only to make the film that much harder to forget. The American Film Distributing Corp. pressbook lists the original running time at 63m.

TREASURES OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE

1959-64, FoxVideo 2593,
HF, \$29.95, 179m 33s

This "Goldsette" twin-pack represents the ultimate desert island companion for devotees of Rod Serling's classic television series. The program begins with a 1959 promotional film in which Serling pitches the as-yet-unveiled program to prospective advertisers (in this case Sanka Coffee), explaining the premise of the series

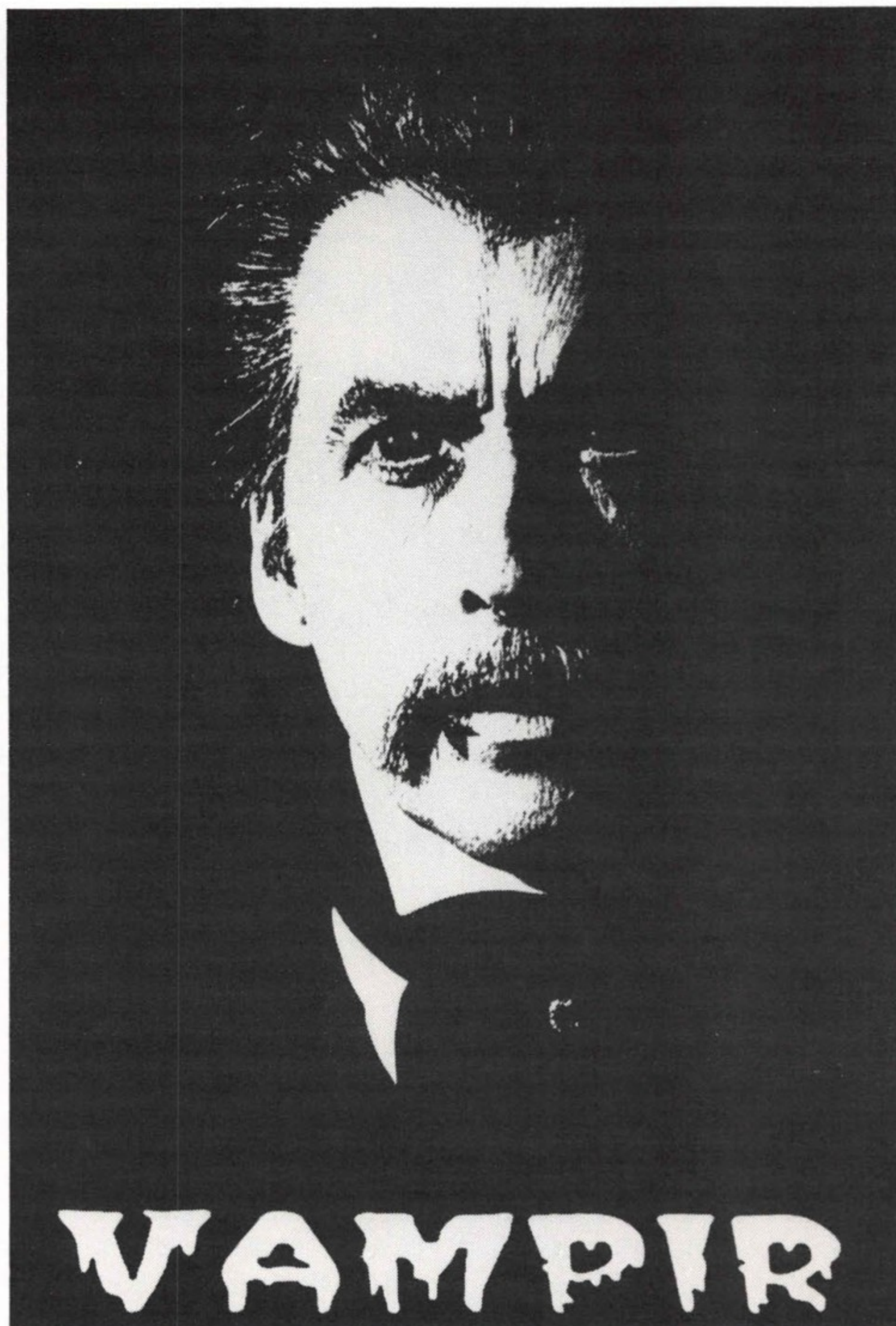


Virginia Gregg, Milton Selzer, LAUGH-IN's Alan Sues, and Brooke Hayward (then Mrs. Dennis Hopper) remove their masks in **TREASURES OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE**.

and offering thumbnail descriptions of the episodes "**The Lonely**," "**Escape Clause**" and "**Mr. Denton on Doomsday**" (under its pre-broadcast title). This never-before-released, one-of-a-kind, 7m short (not 10m, as the box claims) is understandably scratchy, but it offers a rare and privileged glimpse behind the scenes at the show's very origins, and also captures Serling's first hosting experience in front of a motion picture camera. The short ends with Serling introducing the well-known pilot episode, "**Where is Everybody?**" (aired 10/2/59), which immediately follows.

"**Where is Everybody?**" is followed by two rarely-seen, unsyndicated episodes from the fifth and final season. The first, "**The Encounter**" (5/1/64, written by Martin M. Goldsmith) stars Neville Brand as a beery, fundamentally angry, ex-Marine whose war-bred racial hatreds resurface as he

interviews a Japanese-American (George Takei) for a gardening job. The episode makes only the faintest gestures toward a fantasy context—it takes place in an attic that remains supernaturally "locked" until the protagonists settle their existential score—but the writing and performances are potent and confrontational. Its prejudicial references aren't in the best taste, but they are essential to the story, and this *is* only a story; they should not have excluded the episode from its rightful place in syndication and, hence, TZ history. This fine episode is followed by the TZ presentation of Robert Enrico's lyrical, award-winning short, **AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE** (1962, aired 2/28/64), based on the story by Ambrose Bierce. Both episodes feature splendid B&W photography, and look as good as new; it's a pleasure to have them retrieved at last from fuzzy bootleg limbo.



Christopher Lee as El Conde Dracula in Pedro Portabella's *VAMPIR*.

The second cassette contains three of the series' best-loved episodes: Douglas Heyes' directorial *tour-de-force* "**Eye of the Beholder**" (10/11/60), "**The Masks**" (3/20/64, directed by Ida Lupino), and Charles Beaumont's "**The Howling Man**" (11/4/60). The first two spotlight the makeup wizardry of William Tuttle, while the third is distinguished by the torrentially tilting, seasick photography of George T. Clemens. Fox has preceded each episode with a

special treat—Serling's promotional pitches for each one, spoken from an appropriate set at the close of the previous week's episode. (In the promo for "**Eye**," Serling is shown bandaging the head of the episode's heroine!) The program concludes with Serling's 21m grilling on CBS' *THE MIKE WALLACE INTERVIEW*, dating from 1959—recorded as Serling was preparing *TZ*'s first season. With dignity, humor, and a sharp vocabulary, Serling discusses some of the more

repugnant absurdities of TV censorship, admits a few personal and professional insecurities, and rejects the charge that commercial writing, by definition, cannot be artistically satisfying to its author.

Particularly interesting is Serling's statement that *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* came about because he grew tired of the angry, breast-beating, "serious" writing on which he founded his reputation; while Serling bristles at Wallace's definition of the first season's scripts as "potboilers," he claims that *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* will consist of nothing more serious than some good, entertaining stories. Of course, it offered its audience a good deal more than that. Like Serling's earlier "serious" teleplays, *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* was not afraid to tackle unpleasant issues—"The Encounter" is proof of that—and it liked to seduce its viewers with fantasy to gain access to their conscience and sense of moral outrage. Hearing this startling definition in the context of a discussion about the indignities he suffered at the whims of TV censors, one re-winds this fascinating interview wondering if Serling had conceived the show's "science fiction" format in order to tackle serious themes in fantastical disguise, where they would be less apparent—or seem less intimidating—to the network censors... or did the spirit of Serling's writing just surface naturally?

Food for thought. Just what a hungry traveller would expect to find on the midnight menu of... *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*.

VAMPIR

1969, *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, HF, \$17.90 ppd, 66m 25s

Pedro Portabella's rarely-seen B&W documentary about the filming of Jess Franco's **COUNT DRACULA** [*El Conde Dracula*, 1970] takes a unique approach.

This behind-the-scenes chronicle focuses on what's *before-the-camera*, creating a condensed variant of Franco's film—shot entirely from different angles—that periodically interrupts its cinematic narrative with unexpected glimpses of the production's underlying reality. Herbert Lom's Van Helsing makes sure that his false moustache is firmly in place, Christopher Lee is covered with sugar cobwebs by a technician while reposing in his coffin, and Maria Rohm (who plays Mina, and is also the wife of producer Harry Alan Towers) is shown attending the climactic staking scene—in which Mina doesn't appear—in her own *modisch* streetwear. Turn of the century settings are shattered by the sudden intrusion of modern day limousines (which surely inspired a similar touch in Franco's **THE SCREAMING DEAD**) and Jonathan Harker climbs out a high window in Castle Dracula and lowers himself onto a soundstage floor on the other side. Emma Cohen, who would star in Franco's **Al Otro Lado del Espejo** ("The Other Side of the Mirror") only three years later, is revealed here as one of Dracula's undead brides—her participation isn't evident from Franco's version—and the clapboard reads "*El Proceso*," abbreviating the title of Franco's previous feature **NIGHT OF THE BLOOD MONSTER** [*El Proceso de las Brujas*, "The Trial of the Witches," 1969]. The documentary's most engrossing moments spotlight the talented Portuguese actress Soledad Miranda (Lucy); Miranda was killed the following year in an automobile accident at the age of 27 and, besides providing an alternate view of a performance that loses none of its intensity viewed at second perspective, Portabella gives us the only glimpses of the person she was off-camera we'll ever see. All production footage is silent, accompanied

by *avant garde* clicks, howls, and lush orchestral recordings... with the phono needle stuck in the groove! This fascinating production diary ends with Lee in his dressing room, removing his makeup and reading Dracula's death scene aloud from Stoker's novel, in English. Franco himself appears only briefly, in character as Van Helsing's manservant; this project wasn't undertaken as a genuflection to directorial vanity. Now available through Richard Klemensen's magazine **LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS** [P.O. Box 3107, Des Moines IA 50316], this tape—a couple of generations removed from a Portuguese TV broadcast—maybe too grainy and uneven for any but the most obsessed viewers, but it will take them to places accessible heretofore only in daydreams. The onscreen title is **Cuadecuc**, and Franco's **COUNT DRACULA** is designated in the main titles as a *Hammer Film Production* (sic)!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?

1971, MGM/UA Home Video, D/HF, \$14.98, 96m 20s

In the early 1930s, the mothers of two convicted murderers (Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters) decide to evade the telephone threats of locals by changing their identities and moving to Hollywood, where the star-struck Reynolds goes platinum blonde à la Harlow and starts a dancing school. Meanwhile, the dowdy Winters seeks solace in the sermons of a radio evangelist (Agnes Moorehead), while slowly coming unhinged as she becomes aware of a silhouetted stranger who has followed them out west. This macabre, psychological drama (scripted by Henry Farrell, from his own novel) is essentially a study of two women who prefer to live vicariously—namely through

religion and the cinema—whose real lives begin to surface, realistically and frighteningly, through the veils of illusion; to say any more would be to ruin some marvelous surprises. There is no question that this is director Curtis Harrington's finest moment; his handling of suspenseful material has never been more assured, and the various dance numbers are presented with such wit, style, and aplomb—while never once betraying the film's fascination with the grotesque—it's only fitting that this United Artists release should ultimately reappear under the MGM umbrella. Indeed, this film could be described as the shadow cast by MGM's classic musicals. Reynolds and Winters have been this good elsewhere but never better, and there is an eerie performance by Michéal Mac Liammoir (Welles' **OTHELLO**) that is also worth the price of admission. Yvette Vickers (**ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN**) appears as a chain-smoking stage mother, Timothy Carey (**POOR WHITE TRASH**) cameos as a panhandler, and Harrington regular Peter Brocco is glimpsed as a worshipper at Moorehead's sermon. The art direction and cinematography—both exquisite—were the respective work of Eugene Lourie and Lucien Ballard, whose names should be familiar to all devotees of the fantastic. At the behest of producer Martin Ransohoff, Harrington's original cut was deprived of its transitory dissolves (hence the abrupt scene-to-scene cutting) and softened to escape an R rating. (Among the deleted footage was an on-the-lips kiss between Reynolds and Winters after they conceal a corpse in a ditch, and a gory **PSYCHO**-like montage during the climactic murder.) Don't let the PG rating put you off; the film suffers not at all from its cuts, and its content is fully commensurate



Zak teaches Crysta the pleasures of politically correct rock music in FERNGULLY... THE LAST RAIN FOREST.

with a contemporary PG-13 or R rating. This gem deserves to find the appreciative audience that has always eluded it. The 1.85:1 screen ratio has been cropped (at times cramped) to 1.33, and the film has been subtly time-compressed from its actual 101m length.

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS: COMMISSIONER OF SEWERS

1986/91, Mystic Fire Video, HF, \$29.95, 54m 41s

This German-made video documentary is a disappointingly brief but otherwise welcome counterpart to Mystic Fire's **TOWERS OPEN FIRE** (Mystic Fire 085, \$29.95), a fascinating compilation of the experimental shorts Burroughs made in the 1960s with the late Antony Balch. The centerpiece of this portrait of the artist is a B&W interview recently conducted at Burroughs' Lawrence, Kansas residence by German writer Jürgen Ploog; the topics are literature, language, dreams, death, and the act of writing, all of which are addressed with insight and humor by the sardonic subject, who seems to be all the while squirming with

desire for better-framed questions. Intercut with these observations are SPFX-bombarded highlights from a 1986 New York City reading, in which Burroughs recites his "Thanksgiving Prayer," his hilarious reasons for not wanting to be President, and excerpts from his novel **THE WESTERN LANDS**. Not as definitive a profile as Howard Brookner's **BURROUGHS**, but quite acceptable as an update or post-script. Directed by Klaus Maeck.

ANIMATION

By G. Michael Dobbs

FERNGULLY... THE LAST RAIN FOREST

1992, FoxVideo, D/S/SS/CC, \$19.95 (VHS), 76m

FoxVideo 5594-80, \$29.98 (LD/CLV)
FoxVideo 5594-84, \$39.98 (LD/CAV)

At the heart of this animated film is an effort to synthesize certain animation styles and traditions in order to create something new: the children's animated film with an agenda. This is not

necessarily a bad thing, considering that the agenda is to save the rain forests. As family entertainment, **FERNGULLY** offers a rock and roll score (provided by Politically Correct artists) and a loopy vocal performance by Robin Williams for the adults, while giving the kids Saturday Morning-style good guys and bad guys. The animation is capable, and the character and color designs are certainly a step above most kidvid, but the film lacks daring and innovation. Director Bill Kroyer and screenwriter Jim Cox stay comfortably within a formula which draws from Disney, Warners and Tex Avery. If you're going to do something which addresses a real problem, why not pull out the stops and really *talk* about that problem? **WHEN THE WIND BLOWS** stands out as a more successful example of using animation to convey a serious message about a serious subject.

FORBIDDEN ZONE

1980, Media Home Entertainment M288, 75m

If, at the end of a long work day in the mid-Thirties, everyone at the Fleischer Studio had dropped acid and decided to make a feature, **FORBIDDEN ZONE** would have undoubtedly been the outcome. Surreal, outrageous and thoroughly original, this combination live-action/animated musical comedy deserves a far greater reputation than it has. Unlike other cult favorites like John Waters' **PINK FLAMINGOS**, this movie had only a scant theatrical release and didn't have the opportunity of building up an audience, but on videocassette, it has garnered a solid word-of-mouth reputation. This is not a new release, but it can still be found in many national video chains. Written, produced and directed by Richard Elfman (and scored by his brother Danny), **FORBIDDEN**



Judge (Simon Yam) dares to double cross Chow Yun Fat in FULL CONTACT.

ZONE tells the story of the Hercules family and their trip through a mysterious door in their basement to the Sixth Dimension, aka the Forbidden Zone. There, Herve Villachaise and Susan Tyrell reign as the thoroughly demented King and Queen. The animation is done in the anything-goes style of the early Thirties, and much of the movie's music draws from that era as well. Crisp B&W photography adds to its overall effectiveness.

ASIA

By Erik Sulev

The massive scope of the Hong Kong video scene, with its Cantonese and Mandarin tapes (not to mention an enormous amount of titles available on laserdisc)

combined with the task of searching for subtitled versions of various titles—can be intimidating to those unfamiliar with the wonderful world of Asian video. Those weak of heart and weaker of patience should be forewarned, because in recent months, yet another element has surfaced in Chinatown video stores: the Cantonese bootleg tape!

Generally, North American HK video follows this release pattern: first, the Taiwanese Mandarin language tapes (Long Shong or King's Video, for example) precede the Cantonese versions (distributed by companies like Rainbow, Ocean Shores, and Eternity), while the laserdisc pressings can appear at anytime, up to six months after the Cantonese titles. Technically, the Taiwanese tapes are not supposed to be available outside of Taiwan, and their widespread availability in Chinatowns up, down, and across

North America cuts into the theatrical releases of these films, and also quite deeply into the sales of Cantonese cassettes. After all, why buy a Rainbow tape if the Long Shong version has been on the shelves for half a year? Some Cantonese distributors are actually tackling this problem by bootlegging their *own* movies! Transferred directly from 35mm HK prints, these tapes are speeded into stores in order to beat the Taiwanese copies to the punch!

As it stands, the tapes are a mixed value for your rental dollar. They are always subtitled (at least the ones I've seen), never letterboxed, and the picture quality ranges from average to good. A small gray digital display, bearing the letters NPW, in the bottom corner may be bothersome to some, but becomes easier to ignore once the viewer gets used to it.

Finally, these tapes hit the stores with lightning speed, long before the films get a theatrical release in local Chinatowns. A large amount of the tapes are Category III sex films, but as can be seen in this issue's Asian report, more than a few treasures can be easily acquired.

FULL CONTACT

1992, Cantonese bootleg, 94m

The vastly underrated Ringo Lam directed this fantastic Chow Yun Fat action film, which never disappoints. Jeff (Chow) and friends Sam (**HARDBOILED**'s villain Anthony Wong) and Chung join forces with the sociopathic Judge (Simon Yam) and his gang of sexual deviants to stage the daylight heist of a massive arms shipment. Unbeknownst to Jeff and Sam, Judge pulls a brutal double-cross, leaving Chung for dead, Sam on the side of Judge, and Jeff shot. Need I tell you that Chow comes back to settle the score? Chow's score-settling is unequalled, thanks to an intelligent plot that overrides the obvious clichés, intriguing characters (wait until you meet Virgin and Deano!), colorfully portrayed by an excellent cast, all pulled together

by Lam's excellent direction. A climatic shootout takes the perspective of the combatant's bullets as they fly past heads (and, in one case, *through* one!), resulting in an expanded version of the now famous keyhole scene in Dario Argento's **TERROR AT THE OPERA**. Although not letterboxed and annoyingly cropped at times, the tape is of average picture quality and subtitled. This writer, for one, is anxiously awaiting the Cinema City laserdisc.

MEN BEHIND THE SUN 2

aka *MARUTA 2, LABORATORY OF THE DEVIL*

1991, Mandarin: HN Video, 88m
Cantonese: Bootleg, 92m

In the latter days of WWII, hero Taro Handa grapples with his conscience while helping the Japanese leaders of Camp 731 to perform inhuman experiments on Chinese prisoners of war. Based on real experiments (yes, there really was a Camp 731), **MBS2**—like its infamous predecessor—is unpleasant stuff. The Mandarin version, available for nearly a year, was shorn of the atrocities and mondo nastiness that fans of the first film had come to expect. What was missing? Some disgusting

autopsy and surgery footage, a graphic limb amputation by surgical saw, a victim whose death is timed as he bleeds following several cuts from a sword, a freezing experiment resulting in skin pulling and finger cracking, a bayonet gut-pulling during a prisoners' revolt, and the hero's own decapitation as he makes a stand against what he's been helping to perpetuate. As well, there's forced sex with disease victims, the famous corpse furnace, and the rape of a geisha. An uncut, letterboxed Mandarin tape, with slightly better picture quality, has also surfaced. Despite these improvements, **MBS2** still doesn't measure up to the power of the first film, and comes across as an exploitative source of cheap thrills for the jaded gorehound.

BLACK CAT

1992, Ocean Shores, LD/MA, 95m

This, for the most part, is a HK remake of Luc Besson's **La Femme Nikita**, starring Jade Leung as Catherine, a misfit who is "rescued" from a brutal run-in with American police by Brian (Simon Yam), who plants a microchip in her brain and trains her to become a super-assassin for the CIA. The film is actually a lot of fun, despite its debt to the original's plotline, and an open ending deliberately points the way to a possible sequel. For those of you who are anguished by the inaccessible soundtracks of Mandarin tapes, which offer English subtitles only for Cantonese dialogue, cry no more! Ocean Shores has released this laserdisc in an innovative multiple audio pressing, which allows the viewer to hear either the Mandarin, or the English/Cantonese version. In fact, the English/Cantonese soundtrack makes more sense as the film contains numerous references to Catherine's difficulty with Chinese dialects, and her preference for speaking English! As usual, Ocean



WORDS OF WISDOM
found on the box of
Twilight Video's X-
Caliber **TRAP THEM AND KILL THEM**: "Because some scenes are so explicit, children under 13 should not be permitted to see **TRAP THEM AND KILL THEM**."

Shore's disc isn't letterboxed, but the multiple audio and English subtitling when needed, make this the definitive home video version.

SAVIOR OF THE SOUL

1991, Universe, LD/LB/SS, 96m

An elaborate and stylish concoction of action, fantasy, and romance, **SAVIOR OF THE SOUL** has literally something for everyone. Andy Lau, as a policeman whose beat spans the supernatural and physical worlds in a timeless era, must defeat his evil nemesis Silver Fox (Aaron Kwok) in order to save the soul of his beloved, equally deadly partner (Anita Mui). The film is a visual treat from start to finish, filled with delirious swordplay, bizarre weapons and gadgetry, offbeat humor and, of course, the sultry presence of Mui. The plot may be a little too unreal and off-kilter for some, but the disc looks and sounds beautiful, is letterboxed at 1.85:1, and encoded with stereo surround sound, firmly planting the viewer in the middle of the action and lunacy. Highly recommended.

CANADA

By John Charles

AMAZON COMMANDO

1984, Premiere Entertainment, SP Mode: OP; EP/SLP Mode: Approx. \$10 Canadian, 87m 6s

The box says **AMAZON COMMANDO**; the label says **COMMANDO AMAZON**; the print says **GOLDEN QUEENS COMMANDO**—call it what you like, this movie is insane! Seven female prisoners, each an expert (theft, marksmanship, etc.) team up to destroy an enemy chemical lab. It's a Hong Kong variation on the old **DIRTY DOZEN/SEVEN SAMURAI**



*It's the only shot from **FLAVIA, PRIESTESS OF VIOLENCE** we could find!*

formula, set in WWII (ha!) with martial arts-style acrobatics and odd spaghetti western elements. What the film lacks in narrative coherence, it makes up for in sheer exuberance, boasting a prison break, a bar brawl, a food fight, battles on horseback, booby traps, graverobbers masquerading as ghosts, and combat with many weapons. No less frenzied is the soundtrack, which steals music from **MANIAC** (1980), **DRESSED TO KILL** (1980), **THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY** (1966) and many others. Sexy Sally Yeh (**THE KILLER**) steals the show as a chain-smoking dynamite expert in cutoff jeans (a style not seen much in the '40s). The dubbing is excruciating but oddly suitable, considering the cartoonish goings-on. The source print is splicy and features much negative damage (common for HK films of the period). The first 3m are letterboxed to an approximation of the original 2.35 ratio; the rest is badly cropped to 1.33, cramping the action and rendering many of the credits illegible. This print credits direction to Chu

Yen Ping (**ISLAND OF FIRE**), though the version Tom Weisser reviewed for **ASIAN TRASH CINEMA #1** featured the bogus Anglo name "Lawrence Full." A follow-up called **PINK FORCE COMMANDO** (1985), with much of the same cast, has also been released.

FLAVIA, PRIESTESS OF VIOLENCE

1975, Astra/Vogue Video, LB/OP, 99m 34s

Because it was written and directed by women, **SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE** (1982) is often ludicrously cited as an example of "feminist horror." For something much closer to the truth, seek out this powerful, disturbing film by director Gianfranco Mingozzi (**SARDINE: KIDNAPPED**). Florinda Bolkan stars as Flavia, a 15th century nun who rebels against the male doctrines that have controlled her life since childhood. Her rejection of Christianity causes her to embrace an invading Muslim army, but she soon discovers that the equality she sought will not be found with them either. With its

graphic depictions of rape, torture and murder, the film may be too much for some viewers, but there is much more going on here, from an intellectual standpoint, than in similar efforts. Mingozi's film makes effective points about the Church's suppression of women and is strong enough, thematically and emotionally, to make it a worthy companion piece to Michael Reeves' **THE CONQUEROR WORM** (aka **WITCHFINDER GENERAL**, 1967) and Ken Russell's **THE DEVILS** (1971). A large part of the film's success can be attributed to the excellent performance of Bolkan, always convincing in her confusion and rage; her rendering is so compelling that the downbeat ending is particularly painful to watch. The source for the transfer is an old release print (bearing the title **FLAVIA, THE HERETIC**), a bit scratchy but otherwise fine. The widescreen image is crop-boxed to approximately 1.66. The Italian language edition **Flavia la Monaca Musulmana** on the P.A.C. label is reportedly a bit longer.

H

1990, Alliance Home Video, HF, \$89.95 (Canadian), 93m 14s

Writer/director Darrell Wasyk makes an auspicious debut with this harrowing glimpse into the hell experienced by two junkies desperately trying to "kick." Blacking out the windows and nailing the doors shut, Snake (Martin Neufeld) forces himself and Michele (Pascale Montpetit) to face the horrors of cold turkey withdrawal. Their tortured monologues vividly touch on the benefits of a straight lifestyle vs. their voluntary enslavement to heroin's all-encompassing power to wash away one's needs and cares. Along the way, pain, impotence, paranoia, violent fantasies and the past are all given their due.

Ninety minutes with two suffering junkies may sound like unequivocal torture, but Wasyk keeps things interesting by making his protagonists distinct. Snake is an avid reader who uses so that he can escape his empty life and experience the Kafkaesque world he covets; Michele uses to forget a past life scarred by fear, guilt and sexual malaise. By confronting their anxieties, they try to purge the poison from their bodies and minds. **H** never yields in its mission to be decisive and unrelenting; noticeably absent are the humorous asides that helped keep Alex Cox's **SID & NANCY** (1986) and Gus Van Sant's **DRUGSTORE COWBOY** (1989) palatable and R-rated. Wasyk's film features the grainy, "you-are-there" look and feel of Buddy Giovinazzo's **COMBAT SHOCK** (aka **AMERICAN NIGHTMARES**, 1986) and Jim Van Bebber's **DEADBEAT AT DAWN** (1987), but replaces their exploitation elements with more reflective writing and better acting (Neufeld and Montpetit are both excellent in very tough roles). I hope that the Canadian independent scene can continue to deliver unpolished gems like **H**; in the meantime, someone give this director some more money! Some setups are cropped by the 1.33 transfer, but it's fine on the whole; the box lists the running time as 96m.

FRANCE

By Lucas Balbo

FOLIE CONTRÔLÉE

("Controlled Madness")
1975, Manhattan Video, OP

Unreleased in French theaters and rarely seen anywhere, this is **THE KEEPER**, a Canadian oddity shot in 1975 in Vancouver, British

Columbia. More of a detective film than a horror item, it evolves around an asylum directed by "the Guardian" (Christopher Lee), a crippled hypnotist who hounds a band of rich lunatic inheritors in order to get their families' loot. Curiously, the director introduces numerous comedic touches to this rather dark crime story, preventing it from ever becoming too scary. Otherwise, Christopher Lee's performance as the sadistic psychoanalyst—mentally torturing his patients with a strange machine that hypnotizes them with heliocidal red and green lines—is very good, one of his best efforts after his Hammer years. In Robert W. Pohle and Douglas C. Hart's book **THE FILMS OF CHRISTOPHER LEE** (Scarecrow Press), **THE KEEPER** is considered "lost" because of union-related legal problems, which may explain why the cast is so amateurish in comparison to its star. Although the box credits Donald Wilson, the true director was Tom Drake... Could this be the same Tom Drake who acted in **THE CYCLOPS**, **THE SPECTRE OF EDGAR ALAN POE** and TV's **KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER**, and died in 1982?

GERMANY

By Peter Blumenstock

RETURN OF THE HITCHER

aka **HITCHER 2—PAURA NELL'BUIO**
("Hitcher 2—Fear in the Dark")
1990, Italy, Ascot-Video, 89m

Released in Italy as **Hitcher 2—Paura nell'Bulo** to cash-in on the erstwhile popularity of Robert Harmon's **THE HITCHER** (1985), this latest film by Umberto Lenzi (alias "Humphrey Humbert") for Joe D'Amato's Filmirage company is another uninspired,



Gianna Maria Canale plays the ponies in Riccardo Freda's *THEODORA*.

run-of-the-mill product for the international video market. The film is marred by Filmirage's usual attempts to make each of their recent pictures look American—with stupid teenage clichés, wet T-shirt contests, lousy rock music, and bad acting by Josie Bisset and Joseph Balogh. Connected only by its title to Harmon's film, **RETURN OF THE HITCHER** is about a psychopathic young man, suffering from an Oedipal complex, who picks up young hitchhiking females and kills them in his camper. Moments of atmosphere and suspense prove once again that Lenzi is not a bad director, simply unable (or perhaps unwilling) to adapt his talent to low-budget productions. Poor settings, a stock-footage score by Carlo Maria Cordio (used before in Martin

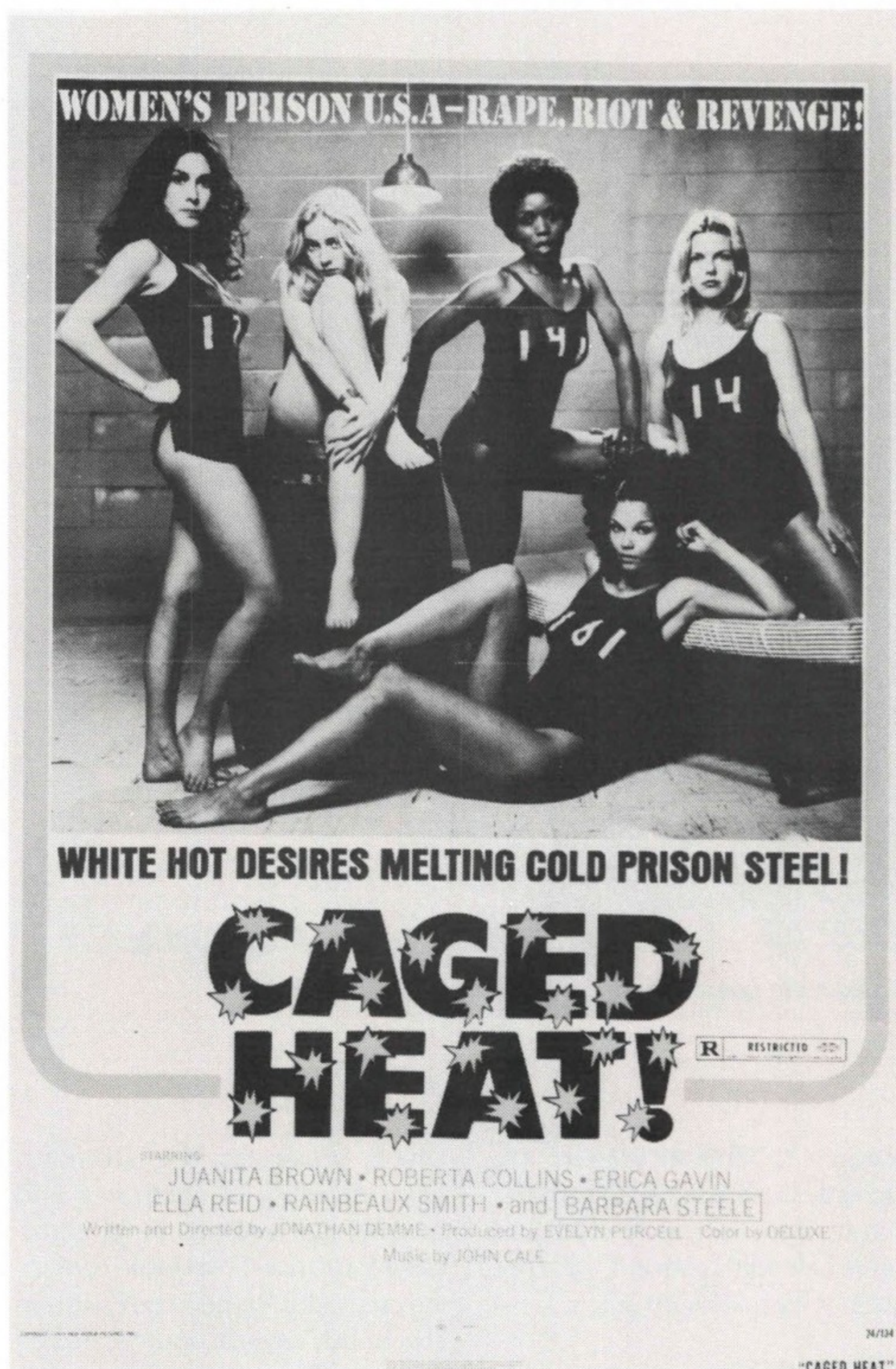
Newlin's **CONTAMINATION 7!**), and listless photography turn the picture into so much cold and sterile celluloid fastfood, with not much Italian identity left.

THEODORA

aka *THEODORA, IMPÉRATRICE DI BISANZIO*, 1953, Italy, Wonderworld WO228, \$7, 90m

Gianna Maria Canale stars in Riccardo Freda's epic tale about Theodora, a beautiful thief who manages to become the Empress of Byzantium, now available on German video for the very first time since its 1954 theatrical release. Released by Wonderworld Video, a quite obscure label specializing in cheap sell-through tapes for supermarkets, this video-version seems to be taken from a brand new 35mm print

which preserves the stunning color diversity of costumes and magnificent settings in its inimitable Ferrania-Color look. (Opening credits list Pathécolor/Eastman stock, but several sources name Ferrania. This also explains a certain blue tint on white surfaces, typical of the Ferrania procedure and especially notable during a masterfully directed chariot race in which the white horses almost appear to be painted blue.) As is so often the case with cheap video companies, not a spark of respect has been shown to this timeless masterpiece. Wonderworld's release has been heavily cut from 118m to 90m, deleting several important dialogue scenes between Theodora and the King, and the 2.35:1 lensing has been unwatchably cropped to "full screen" 1.33.



VON LUFT UND LIEBE

("From Love and Air")
aka *VOLERE VOLARE*
("Learn to Fly")
1990, Italy, VCL-Video

This film could superficially be described as an Italian **WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?**, due to its combination of animated characters and live action sequences, but it is also one of the most intelligent and original fantastic films in recent years. Director/actor Maurizio Nichetti—considered one

of the most promising representatives of Italy's new comic generation, particularly after his highly appraised debut *Ladri di saponette* ("The Soap Thief," 1989)—provides this film with another variation of his favorite subject: the influence of film magic on reality. Whereas *Ladri di saponette* showed TV advertisements taking over a B&W neo-realistic world, and turning the economically ruined Italy of the early '50s into a videoclip-chaos of shampoo models, soft drinks and

chocolate bars, *Volere Volare* tells the trivial but charming love story between a call-girl and a quite clumsy fellow who slowly transforms into an animated cartoon character. Abandoning the ironic criticism of his debut feature, which made fun of the disgusting habit of TV stations interrupting movies with commercials, Nichetti's latest picture is a celebration of fresh, naïve but never vulgar humor, reminiscent of the classical Italian "*comedia dell'arte*" films of the '60s. His characters are Don Quixotes of everyday life who tilt at the windmills of an absurd reality but never lose the courage to carry on, even if this means dealing with cartoon turtles. The film's unpretentious brand of humor is quite unique, spiced with slapstick interludes and eroticism, but always adding an ironic point of view, such as the reality which prostitute Martina must face each day. There is a sadistic cab driver who only finds sexual fulfillment in driving his "victims" like a madman, a fetishist who collects xeroxes of women's bottoms, an old man who loves to be babied, and also a perverted couple who enjoy funerals in a very private manner. VCL-Video's release appears to be slightly letterboxed, cropping the film's original 1.66:1 ratio to approximately 1.45.

ITALY

By Simone Romano

FEMMINE IN GABBIA

("Caged Females")
1974, Playtime/Eden Video,
72m 43s

Jonathan Demme might not be too pleased to learn about the Italian butchering of his *opus prima*, **CAGED HEAT**, one of the best films in the "women-in-

prison" genre. First of all, the Italian-language dubbing is terrible, with the meaning of many lines of dialogue completely changed, but—what's worse—the Italian theatrical distributor added a pathetic narration over the opening credits to provide a "justification" for the events of this mild exploitationer. The narrating voice is heard again at the end, explaining that the girls—fugitives rebelling against prison lobotomies—were apprehended after 48 hours, and that all but one (which one?) perished in an ensuing gunfight! The copy is also incomplete: a 2m 12s nightmare sequence which occurs approximately 17m into the movie is totally missing; the scene in which Erica Gavin gets shock treatment is "shortened" by 55s; the sequence with the prison doctor abusing a drugged Roberta Collins lacks about 21s; and a couple of other less significant, brief sequences (eg. the prison guards waking up the convicts) are missing in their entirety. The film has recently been reissued in Italy by Eden Video [Via Achille Grandi, 1, 20017 Mazzo Di Rho (MI), Italy], which acquired many titles from the now-defunct Playtime label. I have not seen Eden's new tape, but it is highly probable that it contains this same, abortive version.

MADELEINE—ANATOMIA DI UN INCUBO

(*"Madeleine—Anatomy of a Nightmare"*)
1974, General Video, LB,
100m 10s

This strange psychological thriller, directed by Roberto Mauri (**SLAUGHTER OF THE VAMPIRES**, 1960), is one of a handful of Italian films featuring the American actress Camille Keaton (**I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE**). Keaton plays Madeleine, a mentally disturbed woman married to a rich man, who

has a penchant for occult sciences and hypnotism. She is apparently schizoid and can't tell dreams and hallucinations from reality, and her split personality is also nymphomaniacal (which gives way to a few tame erotic scenes that won the film an "18" rating)... or is she just a victim of her husband's hypnotic games? Mauri, who also wrote the script, introduces several subplots and drops them halfway, without development, until the inevitable twist ending.

SPIANDO MARINA

(*"Spying on Marina"*)
1992, Deltavideo, NSR, 94m 36s

Sergio Martino's most recent effort to date is this self-proclaimed "erotic thriller," starring busty Debora Caprioglio (**PAPRIKA**), shot in Argentina. Martino directs under the new, transparent pseudonym "George Raminto," though he is credited with his real name for the screenplay, which he co-wrote with Italian exploitation stalwart Pietro Regnoli (**THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE, BURIAL GROUND**, etc.). The film concerns a former Miami cop (Steve Bond) who is expelled from the department on grounds of corruption. He becomes a professional killer, and is hired by a criminal kingpin, who sends him to Argentina to kill a rival boss. His problems start when he meets Marina (Caprioglio), the girl next door, who likes him to spy on her while she engages in S/M with her lover... who also happens to be the designated victim! The only asset to this film is Caprioglio's gorgeous body, bared at the drop of a hat, as Martino does not seem terribly interested in creating any—not even erotic—suspense. The twist ending is less predictable than those of most recent thrillers, but the film still remains of interest only for Martino completists and breast fetishists!



ADDRESSES

KIT PARKER VIDEO

c/o Central Park Media
301 W. 53rd St., 13th Floor
New York, NY 10019
(800) 833-7456

MYSTIC FIRE VIDEO

225 LaFayette St.
New York, NY 10012
(800) 292-9001

SINISTER CINEMA

P.O. Box 4369
Medford, OR 97501-0168
(503) 773-6860

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO

c/o Mike Vraney
P.O. Box 33664
Seattle, WA 98133
(206) 361-3759

VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI

P.O. Box 161917
Miami, FL 33115
(305) 387-6807

ANIMATION:

VIDEO DIMENSIONS

530 West 23rd St.
New York, NY 10011

WHOLE TOON ACCESS

P.O. Box 369
Issaquah, WA 98027
(206) 391-8747

ASIAN VIDEO:

NYUE ENTERPRISES

61-A Walker St., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10013

LASERDISCS & JAPANESE IMPORTS:

LASER'S EDGE

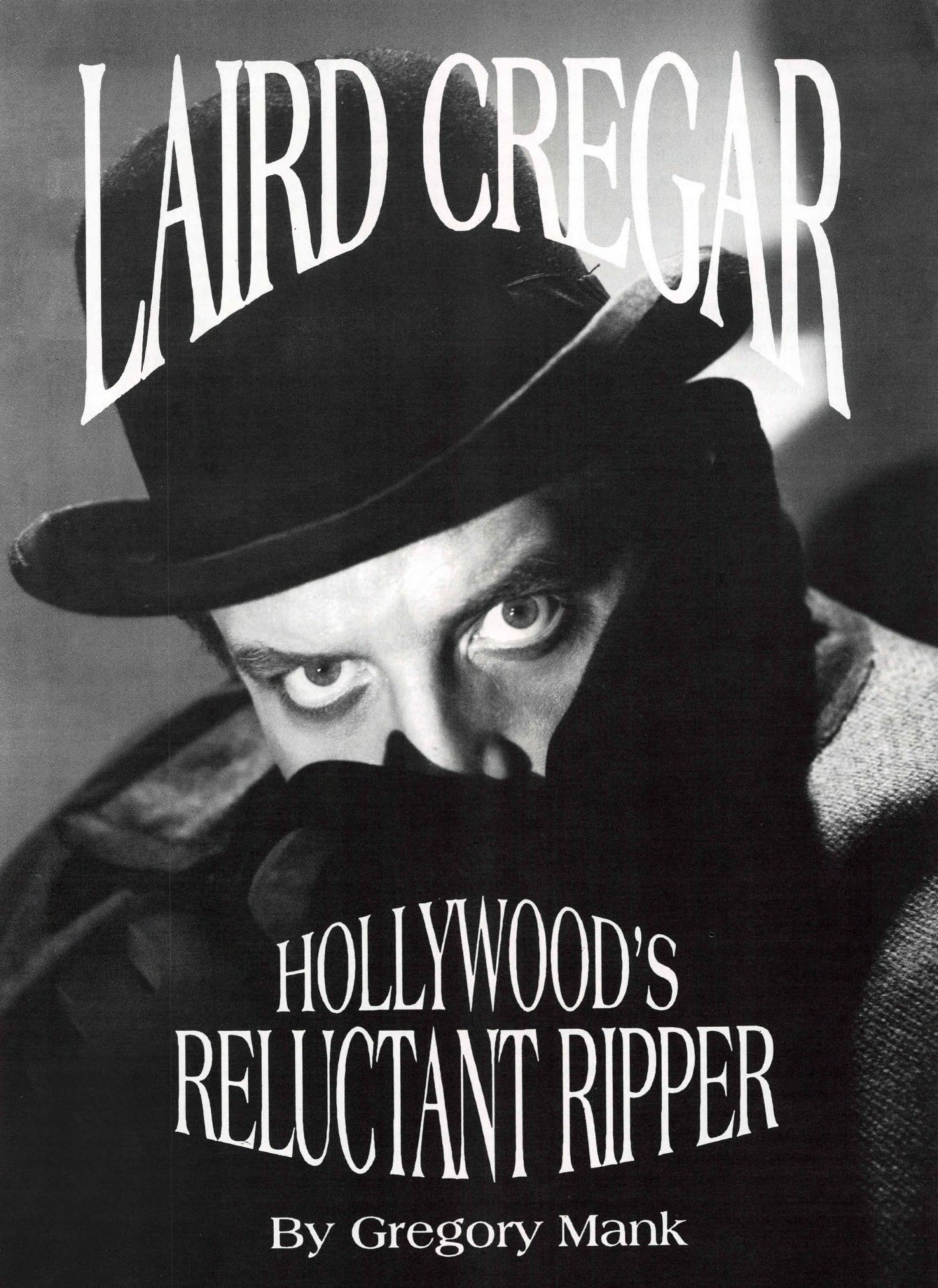
2103 N. Veteran's Parkway
Suite 100
Bloomington, IL 61704
(309) 662-9347

LASER ISLAND

1810 Voorhies Avenue,
Brooklyn, NY 11235
(718) 743-2425

SIGHT AND SOUND

27 Jones Road
Waltham, MA 02154
(617) 894-8633



LAIRD CREGAR

HOLLYWOOD'S RELUCTANT RIPPER

By Gregory Mank

*"I am down on whores and I shan't quit ripping them till I do get buckled. Grand work the last job was. I gave the lady no time to squeal. You will soon hear of me and my funny little games. The next job I do I shall clip the lady's ears off and send them to the police, just for jolly, wouldn't you? My knife's so nice and sharp, I want to get to work right away.
Yours truly, JACK THE RIPPER"*

—Letter, written in red ink, delivered at the Central News Agency, Fleet Street, London, 9/27/1888, believed to be posted by Jack the Ripper.

*"Men will not look at you again as they did tonight!"
—Laird Cregar, as Jack the Ripper
in **THE LODGER** (1944)*



I**N THE HISTORY** of Real-Life Horror, five Whitechapel prostitutes—Mary Ann Nicholls, Anne "Dark Annie" Chapman, Elizabeth "Long Liz" Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and "Black Mary"

Kelly—have won a warped, pathetic immortality. These diseased doxies have the sad infamy of being the slaughtered victims of Jack the Ripper. While this most infamous of murderers butchered only five women throughout his reign of terror—August 31 to November 9, 1888—(Miss Stride and Miss Eddowes mutilated the same evening), the Ripper has perpetuated his bloodlust on the fascinated page, stage and screen.

In 1913, 25 years after the Ripper murders, Mrs. Marie Belloc Lowndes wrote **THE LODGER**, which titillated readers by placing the Ripper as the lodging guest of a respectable (and increasingly jittery) London family. Naturally, the role of Jack the Ripper was a rich fantasy for a dramatic actor, and **THE LODGER** quickly became a play. In fact, Lionel Atwill, later the great Hollywood villain of **MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM** and **MURDERS IN THE ZOO**, made his Broadway debut in **THE LODGER**, which premiered at the Maxine Elliott Theatre January 8, 1917. (It should be noted, however, that the play had permutated into a comedy, with Atwill's Lodger no Ripper, but a handsome, lovesick fool.)

Jack the Ripper has slashed his knife through the expressionistic sets of the German 1924 **WAXWORKS**, escaped unpunished in Hitchcock's British 1926 **THE LODGER** (in which prime suspect Ivor Novello, in a wicked irony, was an innocent Christ symbol), slaughtered a voluptuary (Louise Brooks) and her lesbian lover on Christmas Eve in G.W. Pabst's German 1928 **PANDORA'S BOX**, and struck terror in 1932's **THE PHANTOM FIEND**.

Easily the most celebrated of the Ripper movies is 20th Century-Fox's **THE LODGER** of 1944. This flamboyant, fiery, chilling, exquisitely theatrical

costume melodrama is the most lavishly mounted of these screen sagas—magnificent in its atmosphere, pioneering in its sexual tension, and wickedly audacious in the brilliant, quirky, outlandishly perverse performance by Laird Cregar as the most haunted and haunting of screen Rippers.

It is the only film to capture not only the madness of the maniac, but the shadowy, Victorian alleys of his Whitechapel world as well.

And it is one of the only Hollywood movies ever to contribute—directly, tragically, catastrophically—to the pathetic downfall and demise of its star.

D**arryl F. Zanuck's** 20th Century-Fox Studio, 10201 W. Pico Boulevard, Westwood, had been thriving since 1935. The small, buck-toothed, polo-club-swinging Zanuck, of Wahoo, Nebraska, was a dynamo; he had progressed from writing Rintin-Tin movies for Warner Bros., to becoming Warner's production supervisor, to forming his own 20th Century Productions, to merging his studio with Fox to create one of the most powerful of Hollywood empires. Zanuck's trademark was epic costume spectacle fare, such as **LES MISERABLES** (1935), **THE PRISONER OF SHARK ISLAND** (1936), **IN OLD CHICAGO** (1937), **JESSE JAMES** (1939), **DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK** (1939), **THE MARK OF ZORRO** (1940), and **BLOOD AND SAND** (1941)—although his greatest achievement was a gutsy, moving production of Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning **THE GRAPES OF WRATH** (1940).

Twentieth Century-Fox had dabbled very little in the horror genre—even though Zanuck had signed several of Hollywood's greatest screen villains to Fox contracts. While John Carradine, at the lot from 1935 to 1942, committed some of his most evil deeds in Fox spectacles, he made no horror films in his long sojourn there (unless one counts 1939's **THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES**, with



Laird Cregar as the Devil in Ernst Lubitsch's HEAVEN CAN WAIT (aka HOLY MATRIMONY).

Carradine as a red-herring butler). Lionel Atwill, under contract to Zanuck in 1939 and 1940, came closest to horror in the old chestnut **THE GORILLA** (1939), and a vehicle for the Ritz Brothers, which also employed Bela Lugosi (and wasted Bela and Lionel again as red herrings). Peter Lorre, a Fox player from 1936 through 1939, spent his time primarily in Mr. Moto potboilers and made no terror films at all. Finally, in 1942, Fox churned out two low-budget horror "B"s: **DR. RENAULT'S SECRET** (in which George Zucco turned a simian into J. Carrol Naish) and **THE UNDYING MONSTER** (a sublime werewolf melodrama).

However, come 1943, Zanuck had powerful reasons to seek a solid "A" Horror project. There was a young actor on contract to 20th Century-Fox, a 6'3",

260 pound giant who, in only a few years, had become one of the great "villains" of the screen—with a strange flair for illuminating tortured souls.

His name was Laird Cregar.

Four-Thirty AM, July 28, 1913. At the Cregar home, 6705 Cresheim Road, in the fashionable Mt. Airy region of Philadelphia, Dr. Josephus T. Ullom delivered the 6th son of Edward Matthews Cregar, a tailor, and his wife Elizabeth Bloomfield Smith Cregar, of Philadelphia society. The baby's name would be Samuel Laird Cregar. Years later he would say: "From my first day of consciousness, I wanted to be an actor. Maybe the quirk, the fact that villainy is my special forte—although I hate to be

symbolized as such—comes from being a direct descendant of John Wilkes Booth. He was a 'Ham,' and so am I."

Whether John Wilkes Booth was an ancestor of Laird Cregar isn't certain; Laird had a tendency to embroider the truth (insisting, for example, he was born in 1916). But it is true that from his earliest memory—his early childhood days in Philadelphia, where he practiced his "trapped rat" face before a mirror; through his days at the Winchester Academy in London, the death of his father, the loss of the Cregar fortune, vagabond days as a dish-washer in Miami, a uniformed usher at the Paramount Theatre in New York, an arrested vagrant in Hollywood; to his 1936 scholarship to the Pasadena Playhouse and meteoric rise in the Movies—Laird Cregar passionately wanted to be an actor.

"I realized that I would have to find my own parts. I am, after all, a grotesque. That is, an actor who doesn't fit readily into parts. I needed special roles. I am too big, too tall, too heavy. I don't look like an actor. If I wanted to act, I would have to find plays I COULD act."

—Laird Cregar

Zanuck took note of Laird Cregar (as did all major producers) when the young player starred in *OSCAR WILDE* at Hollywood's El Capitan Theatre in the Spring of 1940. Cregar had mounted the production as a vehicle to showcase himself—and he was a sensation. John Barrymore, Laird's idol, intoxicated the young actor by sending him a fan letter, hailing him as the greatest actor to come out of Hollywood in 20 years.

"Sammy was a genius," said Henry Brandon, "Barnaby" of Laurel & Hardy's 1934 *BABES IN TOYLAND*, referring to the actor by his Christian name. "But he had that selfishness that goes with genius; an incredible selfishness, self-centeredness." Brandon, who several times watched Laird's "brilliant" *OSCAR WILDE*, remembers visiting the arrogant Laird in his dressing room after the show: "I remember that, at the end of *OSCAR WILDE*, he was wearing a monk's cowl, which he kept on as people crowded into his dressing room. And he sat there, so gracious, so grateful for every word of praise, seemingly so humble. It was even a greater performance than he had given on the stage!"

6'3", 300 pound Laird Cregar signed with 20th Century-Fox, making his studio bow as "Gooseberry," Paul Muni's boisterous, bearded, scene-stealing sidekick in *HUDSON'S BAY* (1941). Laird's first

screen villain followed—Curro, the fickle critic of matadors in the sumptuous, Technicolor *BLOOD AND SAND*, starring pulchritudinous Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell, and Rita Hayworth. It's a fascinating, kinky, amazingly effeminate performance, typical of the sly Laird; as his Curro basks in the ringside sun like a gay iguana, gaudy in his sun bonnet, director Rouben Mamoulian cuts repeatedly from femme fatale Hayworth to Laird—each eyeballing bullfighter Power with passion. As Power finally drives his sword into the bull's brain, Laird hysterically screams, "I tell you he is the greatest of the great! The first man of the world!"—giving the impression of a sexual climax.

It was *I WAKE UP SCREAMING* (1941), a Fox sex melodrama with Betty Grable, Victor Mature, and Carole Landis, that catapulted Laird Cregar to stardom. The actor played Ed Cornell, a mad detective with a satanic smile, a silky voice and a grotesque love for the dead Landis. "I'll follow you into your grave! I'll write my name on your tombstone!" purrs Laird to Mature, upon whom he's trying to pin Landis' murder. Laird haunted the film with a terrific theatricality—leering at Landis in flashback, showing up in the middle of the night in the boudoirs of Grable and Mature, seeming to lurk everywhere (save the indoor pool scene in which Betty and Victor flaunted their physiques; 300 pound Laird was mercifully spared from mingling among the trunked participants). Come the climax, we find Laird's apartment a macabre temple to the dead blonde, where, like a shy eunuch, he tenderly places flowers beneath Landis' giant framed portrait—brilliantly shifting Cornell from hateful heavy to pathetic lovelorn.

Upstaging even Betty Grable's legs, Laird Cregar was a sensation in *I WAKE UP SCREAMING*, and talked of life as a Hollywood nightmare. "The trouble with being a consistent screen villain is that your villainy hounds you wherever you go. I get into elevators in a perfectly normal frame of mind, wanting only to be taken up or down, with no thoughts of murder or violence. The elevator girl invariably recognizes me and quakes with fear until we reach my floor."

Cregar's colorful parade of villains continued through 1942: the Gestapo chief who slaps Michele Morgan's face in RKO's *JOAN OF PARIS*; the sissy Fifth Columnist who endangers Veronica Lake in Paramount's *THIS GUN FOR HIRE*; the legendary Captain Henry Morgan in Fox's Technicolor pirate romp, *THE BLACK SWAN*, and Fox's *HEAVEN CAN WAIT* (1943), directed by Ernst Lubitsch, with Laird ideally cast as the Devil. Laird Cregar was popular in Hollywood—a champion of "The Game" (a form of charades), a favorite at costume parties (usually attending "in drag")—reciting Byronic verse at

parties. The actor savored his success, and a favorite pastime was performing wonderfully graceful cartwheels as he made his happy way across the Fox lot.

"Laird was frenetic," said Henry Brandon. "I think he knew somehow he wasn't going to live very long, and was determined to live as fully as he could in the time he had."

Yet there was a dangerous seesaw of genius in Cregar. That there was a strange garnish of sexual ambivalence in some of his performances was not surprising; he was a haunted homosexual, torn between flaunting his desires and hiding them.

Oddly, his home studio was preparing a role which would be a dramatic release and an ultimately disturbing showcase for the sexual tortures he was suffering.

...She is rigid from horror, and staring. We know that Jack the Ripper has come into the room, although we cannot see him, Jennie realizes who he is, and she knows why he is there. She starts slowly to back away. We see the dread in her eyes, and hear her gasping voice as she pleads in terror. She is so afraid that she cannot find her voice. She is looking into our eyes as she looks into the eyes of Jack the Ripper.

—from Barré Lyndon's screenplay for **THE LODGER**, July 12, 1943.

Robert Bassler, who produced such Fox hits as the Rita Hayworth musical **MY GAL SAL** (1942), the mental illness milestone **THE SNAKE PIT** (1948), and the Marine paen **THE HALLS OF MONTEZUMA** (1951), prepared **THE LODGER** while Zanuck was serving in the Signal Corps. For the screenplay, Fox selected Barré Lyndon (1896-1972), a British author who wrote the play **THE AMAZING DR. CLITTERHOUSE**. The psychological melodrama of a doctor who studies the criminal mind, only to become a criminal himself, proved a great success for Sir Ralph Richardson on the London stage, Sir Cedric Hardwicke on Broadway and for Edward G. Robinson in Warner Bros.' 1938 version. Lyndon would pen the screenplays for such exceptional thrillers as **THE HOUSE ON 92ND STREET** (Fox, 1945) and **THE WAR OF THE WORLDS** (Paramount, 1953).

In a 1971 interview with Joel Greenberg, published in **FOCUS ON FILM** (Summer, 1975), Lyndon remembered the challenge of dramatizing the Lodger: "The first problem with him was to get him sympathetic, because he was in it all the way through; he was really the leading man. You couldn't have just a plain and simple murderer. That's one

of the reasons I had him quote the Bible. He read it constantly. I liked that touch; though a maniac, he wasn't thoroughly wicked, which could well be. He had the feeling that he should punish people."

Lyndon had visited the Black Museum at Scotland Yard, and had seen a letter supposedly written by Jack the Ripper; he also researched the Ripper murders at the Huntington Library, studying the London **TIMES** accounts ("The reports were very restrained, but it was all in there."). He completed his first draft script July 12, 1943.¹ Meanwhile, Zanuck returned from his stint in the Signal Corps, and Lyndon received a telegram to report to Zanuck's office one morning for an audience.

Ensconced in his archway like a great statue in a cathedral niche, Zanuck announced that the script was "about 85 to 90 percent right"—then demanded a new ending. The original script had climaxed with a mob chasing the Ripper through the streets, shoving him into an excavation pit (and falling on top of him)—and still following as the Ripper miraculously escaped, at last casting himself off in a dinghy to perish in his beloved "dark and deep" waters of the Thames. Lyndon remembered Zanuck coming out of his sacred arch and acting out his concept of a new ending.

From the conception of the project, Zanuck wanted to star Laird Cregar as **THE LODGER**. Now he turned his energy to selecting a director.

"I have been called many things by many people—stubborn, difficult, temperamental, overexacting. Maybe they are all true. I know I will do a scene 100 times if necessary to get what I want on the screen. I know I cannot have my actors dominate me or my judgment, lest my bird's-eye view of the picture as a whole be distorted by so much as one false note. An artist painting a portrait knows just where the highlights must be. The subject cannot have the same perspective."

—John Brahm,
MOTION PICTURE Magazine

Today, John Brahm (1893-1982) enjoys a posthumous recognition from aficionados of film terror—primarily for his work on **THE LODGER** and **HANGOVER SQUARE**, and his later television work on such shows as **THRILLER**, **THE TWILIGHT ZONE** and **ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS**. Nephew of the legendary German producer Otto Brahm, John Brahm had begun his career as a light comedian on the stage in Germany—before fighting in WWI and receiving the Iron Cross. Afterwards he was artistic

director of Vienna's Burg Theatre, where he staged the world premieres of several Schnitzler and Molnar plays. Later, he opened his own theatre in Berlin, and wed the famous actress, Dolly Haas.

After the Nazi rise to power in 1933, Brahm and his wife fled to Paris, then London, where he was Production Supervisor of **SCROOGE** (1935). His direction of the 1937 remake of D.W. Griffith's **BROKEN BLOSSOMS** for the Twickenham Studios won him passage to Hollywood and a contract with Columbia. After such Columbias as **PENITENTIARY** (1938) and **LET US LIVE** (with Henry Fonda, 1938), and a fine melodrama for Universal, **RIO** (1939, starring Basil Rathbone), Brahm signed with Fox, directing 1941's **WILD GESE CALLING** (also starring Fonda).

The independent Brahm had almost defied himself off the Fox lot: he objected to directing **ORCHESTRA WIVES**, a musical built around Glenn Miller's Band. The result was an ugly fracas in which Zanuck yanked Brahm off the film, replaced him with Archie Mayo and almost blackballed the German director into Hollywood limbo. However, Brahm's atmospheric direction of the Fox "B" **THE UNDYING MONSTER** (1942) saved his career. It was a moody werewolf saga, set in an old manor house atop a cliff by the sea, with terrific atmosphere and a memorable legend: "When stars are bright on a frosty night, beware the bane on the rocky lane." Most memorable in **THE UNDYING MONSTER** was a scene in which a girl is killed on the cliffs by the werewolf—and the camera *becomes* the lycanthrope, twitching and jerking insanely as it closes in on the wildly screaming girl.

"I was a fallen angel, a black sheep," Brahm boasted. "Then Zanuck, remembering **THE UNDYING MONSTER**, gave me **THE LODGER** to do."

The bald, good-natured Brahm (who resembled a benign Otto Preminger) had an unusual habit as a director: he explained his scenes to the actors and crew at a blackboard, like a Geometry teacher or a Football coach. He also lightened his independent streak with a quick and caustic wit. Once, an unwelcome guest sought Brahm's secluded Pacific Palisades house, especially designed by the director to accommodate his European furniture.

"I went to a lot of trouble to find this place," huffed the guest.

"Not half as much trouble as I went to hide it," shot back Brahm.

Fox prepared **THE LODGER** in its usual epic costume style; as such, top-billing went to Merle Oberon (1911-1979) as Kitty Langley, toast of London music halls for her "Parisian Trot," and the Ripper's alluring nemesis. Best remembered for her magnificent death scene as Cathy in Goldwyn's



Merle Oberon as Kitty Langley.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS (1939), Miss Oberon was then married to Sir Alexander Korda, who had cast her as Anne Bolyn in the 1933 milestone **THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII**, and wed her in 1939.

In a posthumously-published interview with Al Kilgore and Roy Frumkes in **FILMS IN REVIEW** (Feb. 1982), the legendary beauty cavalierly recalled **THE LODGER**: "I had been very ill during that period and I didn't want to work anymore. I hadn't worked for a long time, and Zanuck almost forced me into doing this. He said, 'You're so silly. You've got to work.' And the war and everything had gotten to me. So I rather blindly took it—I thought also it was less taxing on me because there wasn't very much to do. But I mean I wouldn't choose that part, you know."

As will be seen, Miss Oberon, whose casting in **THE LODGER** was announced in **THE HOLLYWOOD**



The Lodger (Laird Cregar) confers with his new landlady, Ellen Burton (Sara Allgood).

REPORTER July 21, 1943, would have artistic and personal reasons for remembering **THE LODGER** less than fondly. However, the offer certainly was flattering. Because Sir Alex was flying to Hollywood in late August to escort his wife back to England, Zanuck moved **THE LODGER** up from a late September starting date to August 9, 1943, to accommodate the leading lady.

As John Warwick, Scotland Yard Inspector, Zanuck cast George Sanders (1906-1972), Fox's most irreverent and troublesome star, then campaigning for romantic assignments following his loan-out to UA for **THE MOON AND SIXPENCE** (1942). Sanders, incidentally, had taken a Fox suspension for refusing to star in Brahm's **THE UNDYING MONSTER**.

"The only thing that keeps me from killing half the people in Hollywood," purred Sanders, "is the thought of being jailed."

Laird Cregar, winning the title role, took 3rd star billing under these more experienced compatriots; it was the first time at Fox that the Cregar name would receive star-billing.

A bonus for **THE LODGER** came in the casting of the landlords. Playing Robert Burton was Sir Cedric Hardwicke (1893-1964), a superb actor, most memorable in Hollywood as Death, chased up a tree by

Lionel Barrymore in MGM's 1939 **ON BORROWED TIME** (his favorite screen role), and the evil Justice, tossed off Notre Dame Cathedral by Laughton's Quasimodo in RKO's 1939 **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME**. Hardwicke also won a certain celebrity in the Universal horrors, starring in **THE INVISIBLE MAN RETURNS** (1940), **INVISIBLE AGENT** (1942), and, of course, as the "second son" of the Monster Maker in **THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1942). Sara Allgood (1883-1950), Irish actress Oscar-nominated for Fox's 1941 **HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY**, played his wife, Ellen.*

One of the real stars of **THE LODGER** was the set. In 1937, Fox recreated the 19th century "Windy City" for **IN OLD CHICAGO**, covering nearly 6 acres atop a hill northeast of the Fox main gate. For **THE LODGER**, art directors James Basevi and John Ewing, and set decorator Thomas Little transformed about 1/4 of "Old Chicago" into London's sooty Whitechapel—adding cobblestone streets, bay windows, twisty archways—creating a marvelously sinister set worthy of the Ripper. (Fox's back lot was destroyed to make way for "Century City" nearly 30 years ago, and executive buildings, apartments and stores now stand where Laird Cregar's Ripper haunted the "Whitechapel" alleys.)

Lucien Ballard, who had been Brahm's cinematographer on **THE UNDYING MONSTER**, was behind the camera for **THE LODGER**.

THE LODGER attracted a curious amount of censorship innuendo before it began shooting. **THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER** of July 30, 1943 assured the movie colony that this would be a free adaptation of the Ripper murders, with prostitutes portrayed as "actresses." Then the Hays Office objected, protesting the Can-Can dance "Kitty Langley and her Girls" were to perform; the censor noted that Can-Can dancers usually affected garters, stockings and lacy underwear. In a battle that must have delighted fetishists everywhere, the Hays Office solemnly ordered Fox that Miss Oberon would have to wear opera hosiery as she kicked her Can-Can.

On Monday, August 9, 1943, **THE LODGER** began shooting.

While debating lingerie, the Hays Office had totally overlooked the imagination of the true star of **THE LODGER**.

* Genre buffs may better remember Ms. Allgood as Anny Ondra's mother in Hitchcock's **BLACKMAIL** (1929) and as Nurse Barker in Robert Siodmak's **THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE** (1946). —Ed.

The Lodger outside his lodgings.



MONTAGUE SQ.
W.C.

This is an essential point: in all the killings, we must get over the fact that when these women find themselves face-to-face with the Ripper, and know that they are to be murdered, their great fear of what is about to happen paralyzes their vocal cords, so although they try desperately to scream, they can't do it. Then we'll have a great situation at the end with Kitty, when we see her open her mouth to scream, and no sound comes out. Finally she manages to cry "John!" but there should be a great moment of suspense before she does so, when we believe that she, too, may meet the fate of the other victims of the Ripper.

—From Darryl F. Zanuck's
conference notes, 8/2/43

The foul streets of Whitechapel, Autumn, 1888. The backlot set is magnificent, looking like the slums of Hell itself, with twisted archways and black alleys and so much fog from the "smoke pots" that the company ran between scenes to a parking lot for fresh air. This is Jack the Ripper's world; it is his evil that seems to be warping the buildings and producing that spectral fog. It's Expressionistic, Germanic cinema, as Lucien Ballard recalled in Leonard Maltin's book *BEHIND THE CAMERA*: "I'd always wanted to do fog the way I did it in **THE LODGER**. Before then it was always a gray haze. I did it with the fog in spots, with black and white definition still coming through. And when they ran the rushes, I got hell for it; the producer said, 'I've lived in London, and fog doesn't look like that!' I said, 'You may have lived in London, and fog doesn't look like that—but that's how it *should* look!'"

Cackling laughter, and a hag, drunk, waving a bottle, departs the lights of a tavern. Her raggedy cronies, dancing about, cry their good nights after her, their voices echoing eerily down the cobblestone street.

"Look out for Jack the Ripper!"

"Don't let him catch ya', dearie!"

She passes a mounted policeman and stumbles around a corner, into the darkness. There is a terrible scream—and, in one of the great moments of Hollywood Horror, her murderer screams too.

Far from poverty-stricken Whitechapel, we see fashionable gaslit Montague Square. Sir Robert Burton leaves his house, #18, to buy the latest newspaper: "JACK THE RIPPER SEEN!" hawks the headline. Sir Cedric Hardwicke, in pince-nez, beard and ruffled toupee, is a delightfully eccentric character. Fascinated, Burton turns to a mammoth stranger who has appeared from the fog.

"Amazing!" exclaims Burton. "Another murder in the same district!"

The stranger seems oblivious. He has read that Burton has a room to rent, and Robert's wife, Ellen, played somberly by Sara Allgood, tends to his concern.

"My name," says Laird Cregar's Lodger, remembering a nearby street sign, "is Slade."

Ellen shows him the room. To her surprise, the Lodger shows an affinity for the attic, with its grimy skylight and scarce furnishings. The polite, dulcet-voiced stranger explains that he is a pathologist, who simply needs a place to study—although at times his experiments require "great heat." Ellen explains that she doesn't normally rent rooms, but a business mishap of Robert's has shattered his career and their finances, and she hopes renting a room might help to put him back in business. "He'll break up, with nothing to do," says Ellen. "In a way, these dreadful Jack the Ripper murders are a God-send; he thinks and argues about them instead of moping."

Indeed, one of the delights of **THE LODGER** is Hardwicke's eccentric performance. "Mr. Zanuck thinks it is important that we plant a certain amount of suspicion on Robert," noted a Fox memo. "However, we shouldn't have any clues that point to him as a possible murderer, or anything like that, so that we plant in the minds of the audience that here is a man who could be guilty of a crime." Hardwicke suggests this abnormality. It's sad that Hardwicke himself faced a financial embarrassment late in his life, following a divorce from his young second wife; when he died in 1964, the distinguished, knighted gentleman was terrified of ending his life in an Actors Home.

"This is like a refuge," sighs the Lodger. He pays a month's rent, 20 pounds, in advance, and shyly apologizes, "I'm afraid that my habits are... irregular. I often need to be out quite late at night. But I'd use the back door. Just regard me as a lodger, not as a guest. Then you'll hardly know I'm in the house." The Lodger is especially pleased by a beautiful old family Bible, which he implores Ellen to leave in his room.

"Mine, too, are the problems of Life... and Death."

Ellen descends the staircase and informs Robert that the Lodger will be moving in. She returns upstairs with supper and finds the Lodger slamming the paintings on the wall—paintings of Victorian belles—around backwards.

"Wherever you went in this room," he says with a barely controlled ferocity, "the eyes of those *women* seemed to follow you about!" Besides, he states, they are pictures of "actresses."

Ellen hopes the Lodger isn't prejudiced against actresses, for there's one in the house: her niece, Kitty Langley, whose "saucy" and "daring" Parisian Trot



*Mr. Slade meets Miss Kitty.
"You fascinated him," her father comments later.*

has made her the rage of the provincial music halls.

"Behold," quotes the Lodger, "there met him a woman subtle of heart."

Cregar's Lodger is fascinating; in his posing and posturing, he seems like a 19th century Shakespearean actor, playing Jack the Ripper perhaps the way his "ancestor" John Wilkes Booth would have acted the role. But added to this style, however, is a hint of demonic mania—and a touch of fey quality which becomes incredibly audacious as Cregar develops his performance.

Kitty Langley—beautiful, sophisticated, charming—meets the Lodger on the night of her premiere, as she prepares to leave Montague Square for the theatre. Merle Oberon is quite perfect in the part, all gussied up like a peacock, painted, coiffed and tightly

corseted; one finds oneself wondering how she'd look after somebody squirted her with a hose. Merle Oberon was a fascinating lady; as was revealed after her death, she was born in India (she claimed Tasmania), where she began life as Queenie Thompson—the daughter of a black Indian mother who, as "Merle Oberon" ascended in fame, posed as her maid. Plastic surgery, ambition, and her marriage to Sir Alexander Korda made the metamorphosis complete. Miss Oberon plays her role of Kitty with an aura of sweetness and kindness, and the artificiality of her appearance is just right for unhinging the Ripper, who hates the painted ladies of the stage.

Center: The climax of THE LODGER.







"Kitty and Her Girls."

The Lodger politely turns down the offer of a pass to the audience. He has "work" to do—and will be out very late. Kitty listens as the Lodger soliloquizes:

"I enjoy the streets at night, when they're empty. Sometimes I go down to the Thames. Have you ever held your face close to the water, and let it wash against your hands as you look down into it? Deep water is dark, and restful—and full of peace."

"You fascinated him, you know," Burton tells Kitty later. "He can't take his eyes off you."

The Lodger steps out into the fog. A double-decker bus stops for him. Although there's plenty of room below, the Lodger sits alone on the top deck, and heads toward Whitechapel.

At the Royal Piccadilly Theatre, Kitty makes up in her dressing room, and has a caller—Annie Rowley, once "La Belle Anne," now a poor, forgotten drudge. Annie was a plum part for a character actress, and Fox seriously considered Elsa Lanchester, Doris Lloyd and Helga Moray for the tragic role. All three ladies lost out to Helena Pickard, who might have had an edge over her competitors: she was married at the time to Sir Cedric Hardwicke. Annie wishes Kitty luck; Kitty presents her with money, of which the has-been actress uses half to send Kitty flowers.

That night, Kitty performs her "Parisian Trot" to the cheers of a packed theatre (and Royalty itself!). Miss Oberon displays beautiful legs as he sings (in dubbed voice) her "Tinc-A-Tinc-Tinc-Tinc" song, striking Ooh-la-la poses and performing her "Can-Can." "So the lady can kick," telegrammed Cole

Porter to Miss Oberon after he saw **THE LODGER**; a less appreciative critic noted that the star's "Can-Can" might better have been dubbed the "Can't-Can't." All in all, Kitty's "Parisian Trot" provides **THE LODGER** with a nice vignette of costume spectacle.

As Kitty Langley scores a triumph, Jack the Ripper mutilates Annie Rowley in an alley.

Kitty and the Burtons are celebrating at the Piccadilly when Inspector John Warwick of Scotland Yard arrives. There's instant attraction between Kitty and Warwick, despite his morbid mission: to inform her of the slaughter of Annie Rowley.² Since starring as the Gauguin-like painter of **THE MOON AND SIXPENCE** (UA, 1942), the suave Sanders had demanded Fox provide him with romantic roles. He delighted in being Fox's most recalcitrant actor.

"George was a first-class shit," said Alan Napier, the veteran British actor who died in 1988—and was one of Sanders' few close friends. But Napier admired Sanders' dry wit, inventions—and irreverence toward Hollywood potentates: "As an example of George's humor—I worked with him on an aerodynamic project, since I was good with my hands and he wasn't. I produced many ingenious little balsa wood gliders we would fly over the beach at Laguna. He once called me on the phone at one in the morning—thus demonstrating his complete disregard of other people's comfort or convenience. What he said was this: 'Nape. (pause) It's just occurred to me that Darryl Zanuck is worth his weight in balsa.' I've been laughing at it ever since."



The Lodger and Kitty learn that the Ripper was sighted carrying a black medical bag...

Warwick notes that all of the madman's victims were (at one time) actresses—and that the maniac was glimpsed carrying a satchel.

Meanwhile, the Lodger gives the Burtons (and the audience) cause for suspicion. He burns his satchel, after reading that the Ripper was seen with one; later, he awakens Kitty in the middle of the night by burning his bloody coat—claiming it was contaminated during his pathological work.

The truly startling episode, however, is Cregar's Lodger showing Ellen a self-portrait of his dead brother. "I can show you something more beautiful than a beautiful woman!" says the Lodger, becoming almost hysterical as he stares lovingly at the man's handsome features. "Isn't that a marvelous piece of work, to come from the hands of a man, a young man?" demands Cregar, looking almost lustfully at the cameo picture. The actor's performance has taken another audacious jump: as Charles Higham wrote of **THE LODGER** in his biography of Merle Oberon, *PRINCESS MERLE*, Cregar's "obsession with his dead brother offers more than a hint of incestuous homosexuality." Yet Cregar caps the episode with true pathos.

"He need not have died," the Lodger weeps. "He need not have died."

As **THE LODGER** went on shooting, word spread that Laird Cregar was giving the performance of his life. He also was getting away with artistic murder. As Joel Greenberg wrote in *FOCUS ON FILM* (Summer, 1975), Cregar "found in the role of the Ripper an



... later, she discovers him burning his bloodied coat in the kitchen furnace.

almost therapeutic alleviation of his private Angst, the misogyny of a tormented homosexual."

Cregar's homosexuality was popular gossip on the Fox lot, and Henry Brandon remembered: "Sammy had a little boyfriend who was a dancer in a musical in Hollywood. One night, the boyfriend was sick, so Sammy went on for him, and was in the chorus—and he was a star at the time! I happened to be in the theatre that night, and I couldn't believe my eyes! And he was incredibly graceful, floating like a balloon; still, it was incongruous to see this great fat man among those little chorus boys. Well, Zanuck found out about it, and put his foot down with a *bang!*"

As Cregar slyly spiked his role with homosexuality, incest, and even hints of necrophilia, John Brahm allowed the performance. He suspected (rightly, as it turned out) that most audiences wouldn't detect the Krafft-Ebing neuroses in which Cregar mischievously indulged. **THE LODGER** was Cregar's film, which reportedly upset Merle Oberon; Charles Higham wrote that Oberon was so upset by Cregar's domination of the movie that she invited a carpenter "youth" to her Bel Air house for dinner, and tried to seduce



him; when he honorably resisted, he was “missing from the crew” the next day. Be that as it may, Miss Oberon did begin a romance with Lucien Ballard, who solusiously photographed her in **THE LODGER**, eventually divorcing the mighty Korda and wedding Ballard June 26, 1946. Marrying a cinematographer was considered social suicide by Merle’s society friends; the Ballards divorced three years later.

Miss Oberon did admire Laird Cregar, and feel sympathy for his plight; as Higham wrote in **PRINCESS MERLE**: “Merle tried hard to establish some kind of friendship with this difficult, unhappy man, and in order to cheer him up she told him that he was basically very handsome and if he would lose forty pounds in a diet she recommended of vegetables, light proteins, and no fats, he would look wonderful and still be acceptable in leading character roles. As a result, Cregar suddenly became convinced he could turn from the gloomy restricted life of the homosexual to the more optimistic world of the heterosexual and perhaps could attract a woman and find fulfillment with her.”

Such encouragement, tragically, would prove the beginning-of-the-end for Laird Cregar. Meanwhile, he kept up his incredible performance as **THE LODGER**.

Perhaps the most famous episode of **THE LODGER** is the Ripper’s murder of the Whitechapel hag, Jennie. Red-haired, blue-eyed Doris Lloyd, British character actress who played in such films as Monogram’s 1933 *Oliver Twist* (as Nancy), as well as such Universal horror fare as **THE WOLF MAN** (1941) and **FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN** (1943), missed out on the part of Annie Rowley, but actually did better for herself in this unforgettable cameo. We first see old Jennie in a Whitechapel pub, singing a Kitty Langley song, ending with a derriere thrust à la Kitty to the delight of her friends. She lends her old concertina to Wiggy (Anita Bolster, who beat out Una O’Connor and Eily Malyon for the part), and returns through the streets, past policemen and plainclothesmen, as Wiggy plays a hymn on the instrument. Jennie enters her hovel, sits to undress. She hears a creaking... the lamp goes out.

The execution is a cinema masterpiece. Just as Lyndon’s script dictated, the camera, the audience, becomes the Ripper, shaking and jerking insanely as it attacks Miss Lloyd, horribly, fatally trapped—and unable to scream as Hugo Friedhofer’s music brilliantly swells. Brahm staged it superbly, just as he had staged the lycanthrope attack in **THE UNDYING**

MONSTER. It is one of the most frightening *tours de force* of the Horror film, and one which won notoriety for Miss Lloyd. The veteran actress, who died in Santa Barbara in 1968 (she was remembered in the will of legendary director James Whale), told Joel Greenberg that a fan serenaded her with a letter, claiming he had watched **THE LODGER** 13 times because her nightmarish death scene “gave him a tingle.”

Police search Whitechapel. And, by the Thames, in a rowboat, a massive man crouches over the side and bathes his hands in the dark, restful water.

Back at Montague Square, Kitty and the Lodger have a conversation.

“It’s one thing if a woman is beautiful merely for herself. But when she exhibits the loveliness of her body upon the stage as a lure, leading men on...”

“You are prejudiced against actresses, aren’t you?” laughs Kitty, nervously.

“You wouldn’t think that anyone could hate a thing, and love it too. You can, and it’s a problem then. I take my problems to the river. I also know that there is evil in beauty, and if the evil is *cut out*...”

Elsewhere, Warwick (who, naturally, has fallen deeply in love with Kitty—a convention Brahm and Lyndon make novel by having him take her on a tour of Scotland Yard’s Black Museum!) has employed fingerprints to ascertain that “Slade” is, indeed, Jack the Ripper. He has also remembered a small painting of the Lodger’s brother owned by the Ripper’s first victim—a morbid, degenerate self-portrait of a man ravaged as if by syphilis. He suspects “Slade,” and as Warwick prepares to trap the maniac, Kitty and her Girls perform in a Whitechapel Theatre.

In the audience is the Lodger. And as Kitty strikes her poses and flaunts her lingerie, and kicks to the saucy music, the Lodger’s eyes burn, and his face contorts. Brahm wickedly cuts back and forth from Miss Oberon’s legs and lacy panties to Cregar’s anguished face.

Kitty returns to her dressing room. The Lodger is there.

“You are so exquisite,” gasps Jack the Ripper, embracing the terrified Kitty, too paralyzed to scream. “More wonderful than anything I have ever known. You corrupt and destroy men as my brother was destroyed.” He draws his knife.

“But, isn’t it the life in a thing that makes it beautiful?” gasps Kitty. “If you take away the life, then...”

“Then it is still,” insists the Lodger. “Then it is even *more* beautiful! I have never known such beauty as yours—nor such evil in such beauty. Men will not look at you again as they did tonight!”

Cregar’s face begins twitching, magnificently; he looks ready to explode. Miss Oberon’s Kitty

In this publicity shot, Laird Cregar visits Scotland Yard’s infamous Black Museum—which he never visits in the film!



Unmasked as Jack the Ripper, the Lodger pays a surprise visit to Kitty's Whitechapel dressing room.

splendidly performs her agonized attempt to scream—so painfully, the audience wants to scream for her. At long last comes the scream, and Warwick and company break down the door, shooting at the Ripper. Wounded in the neck, the madman surrenders his prey and runs away; the police pursue as the Ripper ascends into the eaves of the theatre.

Still, the Ripper runs, like some horrible monster, now with several bullets in him. In a brilliant shot, Cregar's Ripper runs across a catwalk, the shadows below flickering up and down his body. This is grand, Germanic cinema now, complete with Friedhofer's thrilling music and Ballard's bravura cinematography, and—dominating all—Cregar's dynamic performance. As Kitty recovers below, the Ripper makes another mad attempt to kill her: he cuts heavy sandbags from the rafter pulleys which fall and land just inches from the terrified actress.

Finally, Warwick and his men corner the Ripper in the theatre. As the men slowly move in, the

Ripper's face, streaked with blood and sweat, glares at them, his panting building monstrously. Cregar's face, as Brahm slowly, almost sadistically advances the camera on him, is a spectacle. It's all there: the "trapped-rat" face Cregar had practiced as a boy; the insanity of one of the world's most horrible murderers; the flamboyance and imagination of a genius, a doomed actor in what would be his greatest role. Suddenly, the Ripper whirls about, crashes through a window—and falls far below, into the waters of the Thames.

Later in the night, the Burtons, Warwick and Kitty arrive near the river.

"A river sweeps a city clean," says Warwick.

"It carries things out to sea, and they sink," says Kitty, who had looked into the hellish eyes of Jack the Ripper, "in deep water."

And, in the dark, peaceful waters of the Thames, we see a shred of the Lodger's ulster, floating out to sea.



From Kitty to the catwalk—the Ripper ascends to his doom.

*The most-sensational picture
of its kind from 20th Century-Fox!*
—PR for **THE LODGER**, January 19, 1944

John Brahm completed **THE LODGER** Friday, October 8, 1943; on October 27, 1943, Brahm began added scenes. Soon the picture was ready for preview, and Barré Lyndon remembered the night vividly: “I saw it at what was then the Paramount Theatre. I remember that very well because the theatre was full and we had to sit at the back among the college crowd. To my astonishment they were all excited and they loved it. When George Sanders came on they applauded and laughed before he said anything at all. They really were with it.”

Preview audiences hailed **THE LODGER**, and Laird Cregar enthusiastically began “plugging” the picture. On Friday night, January 7, 1944, Cregar guest-starred on CBS Radio’s **THE KATE SMITH SHOW**,

in a dramatization of Robert Bloch’s “Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper.”

Wednesday, January 19, 1944. 20th Century-Fox treated the melodrama to a deluxe premiere at New York’s Roxy Theatre. “No \$4.40 Broadway show ever had such stars, tunes, laughs, thrills and girls!” proclaimed the huge poster in the **NY TIMES**; **THE LODGER** stage show boasted Radio’s Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, Jack Durant, Hal Le Roy, and Maurice Rocco, the Gae Foster Roxettes, and “The Voice of Over 10,000,000 Records,” Helen Forrest. Tucked in a corner of the advertisement was a bonus:

“In Person! LAIRD CREGAR TODAY ONLY! All Performances!”

Although he had seen three previews of **THE LODGER**, Cregar was sitting in the first balcony of the Roxy, thrilled to see the movie with an audience—and sitting right next to **NY TIMES** critic, Thomas Pryor. The critic reported that the star

“obviously was not prepared for the ripples of laughter which greeted his more ominous movements on the screen. ‘Interesting reaction,’ he mumbled at least three times.” The *TIMES* critic confessed in his review that he might have laughed too, “if Mr. Cregar weren’t quite so big and hadn’t happened to occupy the next seat,” and opined **THE LODGER** might have been “a good deal more interesting, if Mr. Cregar’s character were less that of a posturer and if he didn’t continually go around trying to scare the daylights out of everyone.”

However, the *TIMES* was largely alone in its reservations: **THE LODGER** became an instant popular (and, for the most part) critical smash hit.

The *NY POST* gave perhaps the best evidence of Laird Cregar’s success as **THE LODGER**: “This department simply must report that, while Scotland Yard’s finest were feverishly scouting the on-screen theatre for the Ripper, the affable Mr. Cregar was seated in the press section, calmly enjoying the picture. A little while later, the popular actor made a personal appearance on the stage—and took a five minute ovation before he finally made his exit.”

THE LODGER became a monster hit. Cregar, thrilled by his reception, stayed with the Roxy stage show for the whole run of the movie; his showboat performance, with its quirky spices (that fascinated even those audiences who didn’t understand his motivation), fully crowned him a Movie Star. No actor had achieved so great a success in a horror role since Lon Chaney Jr. in Universal’s 1941 **THE WOLF MAN**.

Yet **THE LODGER** was much more (at the time of release) than **THE WOLF MAN**, or any of the Universal horrors. It was a pioneering horror movie, paving the way of sexual neuroses in the cinema of terror. The sight of Cregar’s face, twisting and leering as Merle Oberon flaunted her lacy panties and seamed opera hosiery and kicked the Can-Can, was much more novel and sensational to 1944 audiences than a man growing a face full of Special Effects hair. Costume spectacle, sexual melodrama, and showcase for a young, brilliant actor who made Jack the Ripper his masterpiece performance, **THE LODGER** was one of the most memorable movies of the 1940s.

For all its frills, production values, and grand performances, perhaps the greatest power of **THE LODGER** is its ability to lure the viewer into the Ripper’s mind. Lyndon’s script, Brahm’s Germanic flourishes and Cregar’s virtuoso, weirdly sympathetic performance almost sucks the viewer into the psyche of the Ripper. When Doris Lloyd’s Whitechapel hag stares at “us,” as “we” twitch and jerk and insanely advance upon her, Hollywood Magic has performed

a wicked little miracle; it has given us the eyes, vision and horror of Jack the Ripper himself.

THE LODGER’s director and screenwriter paid later visits to this familiar territory. Lyndon adapted Bloch’s “Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper” for *THRILLER* (4/11/61)—hosted by Boris Karloff and directed by Ray Milland. Brahm directed and Lyndon scripted the 1962 *ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS* episode “Don’t Look Behind You,” which Mar D. Neel (in a fine Brahm retrospective for *FILMFAX* #31) calls “a variation on the Jack the Ripper theme.” And Brahm directed, for *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*, “The New Exhibit” (4/4/63), a Ripper variation based in a wax museum.

Finally, as for Laird Cregar, his top femme target of **THE LODGER** would have her revenge on him in real life—although Merle Oberon, who died wealthy and well-loved in 1979, would have been horrified to know it. Miss Oberon’s encouragement to Cregar on the set of **THE LODGER** to diet into a handsome leading man helped fuel the actor’s “beautiful man” campaign—a transformation Cregar personally believed would solve all his personal sexual problems while advancing his stardom.

Less than one year after **THE LODGER**’s premiere, Laird Cregar was dead.

• • • • • NEXT ISSUE • • • • •

The Making of **HANGOVER SQUARE** and The Tragic Last Days of Laird Cregar

NOTES

- ¹ Ironically, Robert Bloch’s famous short story “Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper” was appearing simultaneously in the July, 1943 edition of *WEIRD TALES*.
- ² Although we learn of Annie’s death through George Sanders’ dialogue, we **have** seen it—in **THE LODGER**’s opening! Zanuck felt Brahm’s handling of this murder was so dramatic, and would serve so well as an opening for the melodrama, that he cut the episode from where it originally appeared (right after Kitty’s performance), splicing it into the Whitechapel opening. The producer ordered new dialogue dubbed in (eg., “Good night, Katie” instead of “Good night, Annie”), used only long shots of Miss Pickard, and gambled confidently that no one would recognize her as the victim later in the film.



JOHN BRAHM

The Last Interview

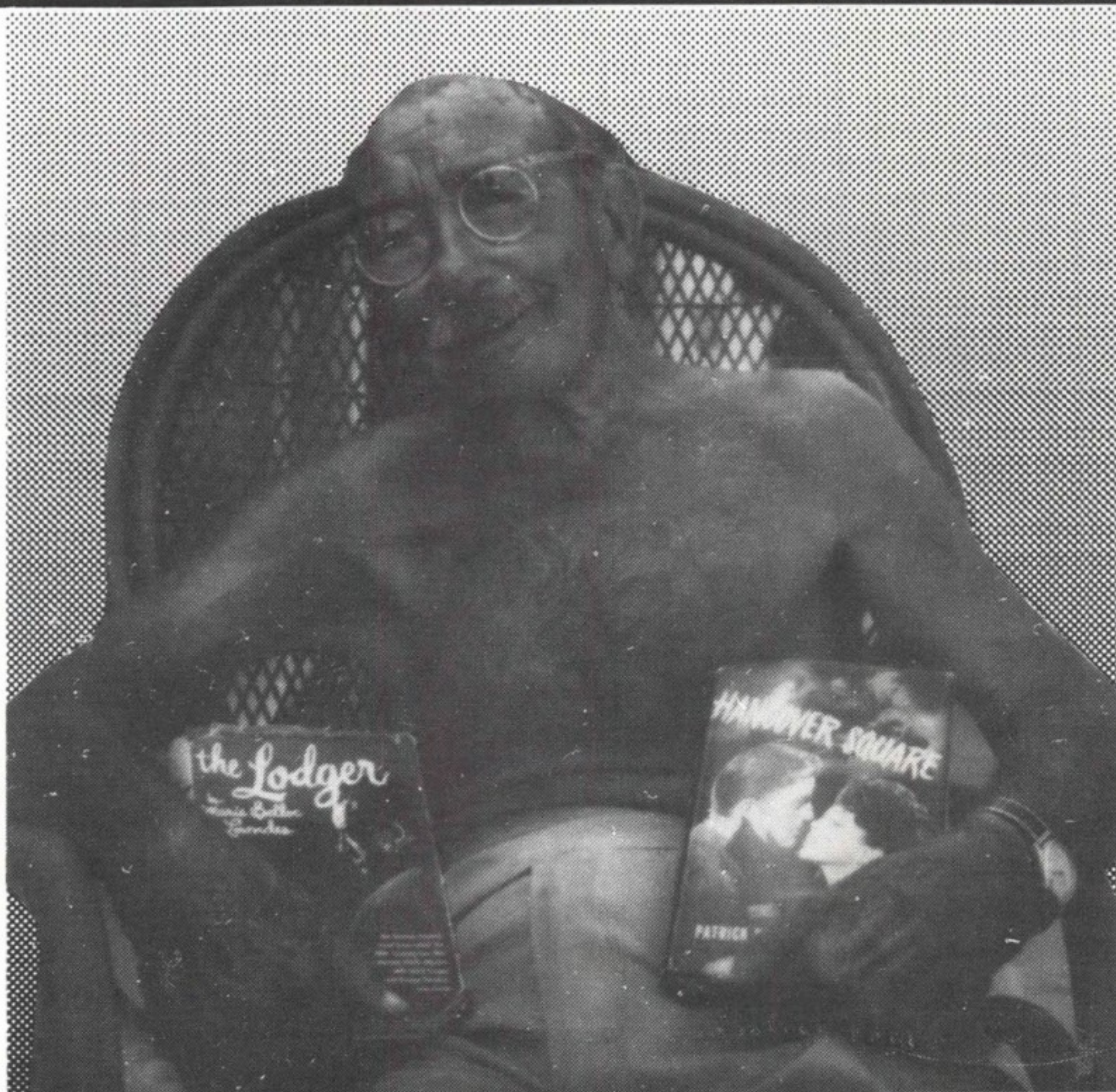
By David Del Valle

This interview—the last ever granted by John Brahm—was conducted in July of 1979, and arranged for me by master puppeteer Eric Von Bulow. The creator of the Pillsbury Doughboy and the terrifying Zumi Doll seen in Dan Curtis' **TRILOGY OF TERROR** (1975), Von Bulow was a fellow countryman of Brahm's and introduced me into the close-knit colony that gathered on summer weekends at Brahm's unique Malibu cottage on three acres high above the Pacific Coast Highway.

Then in his 80s, Brahm was confined to a wheelchair and, being an avid sun-worshipper, stayed on his patio deck as long as the sun was out. This made the interview sometimes less than comfortable to do. His memory seemed vague at times but, more accurately, it was selective, eliminating whatever was not of particular interest to him. Fortunately, his beloved films **THE LODGER** and **HANGOVER SQUARE** were not only of interest to him, but also of great personal importance. Two of his most cherished possessions were the 1944 reprints of the celebrated novels by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes and Patrick Hamilton with their colorful movie tie-in dust jackets.

Mr. Brahm, would you mind discussing the making of your films *THE LODGER* and *HANGOVER SQUARE*?

As long as this interview doesn't turn out to be "The Laird Cregar Story"! [LAUGHS]



Not at all, but it concerns me that Laird Cregar is becoming a sadly overlooked figure in film history. His performances in both films are unique. What do you remember about him?

Laird Cregar was a quiet, sad, aloof sort of man who saved it all for the camera. We could not have done **HANGOVER SQUARE** if his performance had not been so amazing in **THE LODGER**.

How did *THE LODGER* come about?

Well, Robert Bassler was producing at 20th Century-Fox during that time and was keen on Mrs. Belloc Lowndes' book, so he engaged Barré Lyndon to work up a screenplay. Cregar, who had been in **HUDSON'S BAY** and some Rouben Mamoulian thing I don't remember...

***BLOOD AND SAND*, his remake of the Rudolph Valentino silent.**

Right, right. Well, Cregar was quite obese and seemed older than he was, yet this sinister quality was always there. Cregar was already cast when I came on the picture. Darryl Zanuck was still on duty in the Signal Corps, so Barré and I worked out some details uninterrupted. Of course, when he returned there was hell to pay!

What was Zanuck like? Was he a troublemaker for anyone involved in the creative process?

Zanuck, for all his faults, was worth 10 of what you call "studio

*Sun-worshipping John Brahm displays his prized movie tie-in editions of *THE LODGER* and *HANGOVER SQUARE*, circa 1979.*



*Brahm's penchant for atmosphere is superbly demonstrated in this publicity still of Laird Cregar in **THE LODGER**.*

heads" today! Darryl dominated every production on his lot. He lived and breathed pictures. And his ideas were usually right. If your ideas worked better than his, he would say, "Okay, alright." But Zanuck was also allergic to art or anything too grand or pretentious. I liked that aspect of the man.

Had you seen Alfred Hitchcock's silent version of **THE LODGER** (1926)?

I don't know; I might have. I met Hitchcock once or twice in the early days. Hitchcock visited the Fritz Lang sets at UFA in those days.

You can't help but sense a UFA quality in your version, with the eerie sets and dark atmosphere.

My early years were spent in such a way that dark atmosphere came naturally. My uncle, Otto Brahm, was very respected in Germany as a theatrical producer around the turn of the century, and through him, as a boy, I saw productions of *FAUST* and *Die Nibelungen*. I was fascinated with the dark and fantastic, even as a child; the *Puppenspielen* [puppet shows] that came to town would always play Faust and the Devil.

My uncle Otto made it possible for me to work in Vienna and Berlin, when I was known as Hans Brahm. It was a very long time ago. I didn't really start directing films until my forty-second year. "An old man!"

Vincent Price, who worked with you on **THE MAD MAGICIAN** (1954), told me that you always came to the set with your day's work sketched out beforehand. Did you storyboard all of your films?

Oh, yes. I was known at Fox as a maniac for doing complete sets of blueprints for every shot and camera angle before shooting took place. There was no time for mistakes, and when your script is good and your actors know their craft, work is less of a nightmare. In **THE LODGER**, Fox had first-rate people and Barré Lyndon made simple notes for camera movements in the script. All the set director had to do was follow script direction and be creative.

I was always fond of a specific detail in **THE LODGER**, where we see the Ripper bathing his hands in the Thames after a murder, as a kind of cleansing gesture. Was that scripted?

Laird Cregar—you'll be pleased to know—said that the Ripper would do this as a kind of religious ceremony to ease his conscience. Cregar was so in tune with the character, that he basically improvised that bit on the set.¹ Laird was magic to direct in this, to say the least.

How did Merle Oberon come into the picture? There is absolutely no basis for her character in the novel.

Merle shouldn't have been in **THE LODGER**, really, but she had just married our cameraman! I recall that Zanuck vetoed the idea of the Ripper killing prostitutes, so the ladies he killed became

actresses instead! Merle was cast as a music hall singer. In the second film, Linda Darnell played her “singer” so much like a prostitute that the notion surfaced anyway, whether Zanuck liked it or not!

She’s quite memorable in HANGOVER SQUARE. How did that project come about?

THE LODGER was a great success for Fox, and for me. Laird Cregar was a star now and **HANGOVER SQUARE** went into production almost immediately, with Bassler producing and Barré adapting the Patrick Hamilton book as a Cregar vehicle set in 1903, as close to the Ripper era as possible.

In many ways, HANGOVER SQUARE is a more elaborate retelling of THE LODGER.

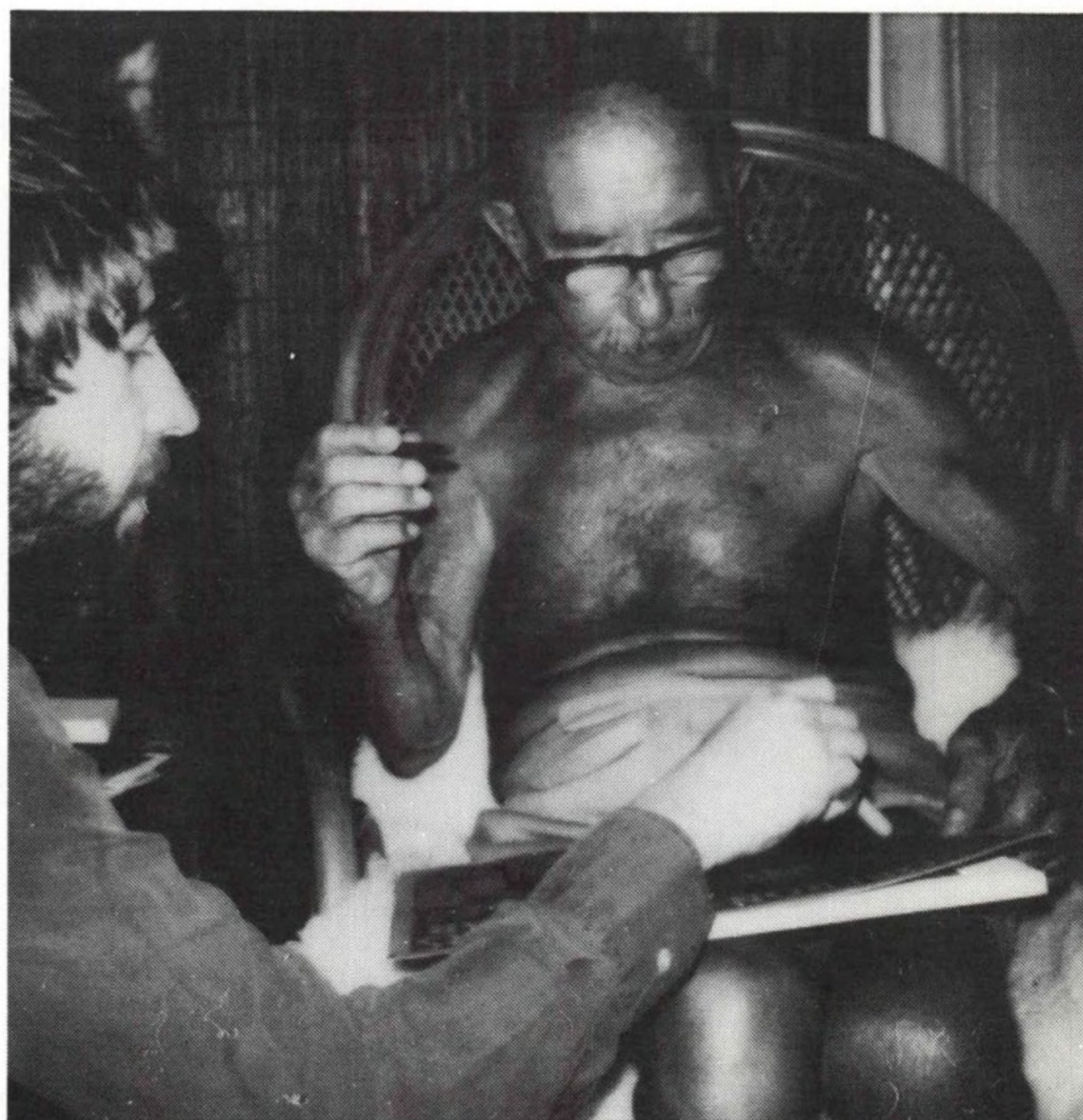
It wasn’t meant to be but, of course, he is an insane killer who goes off whenever he hears a certain piece of music.² Laird was ill during the shooting of **HANGOVER SQUARE**. I remember George Sanders, who was one of his best friends, being concerned about him and this “diet” he was on. Shooting was exhausting to him and the lights didn’t help matters, either.

Did Cregar have illusions of becoming a leading man?

I suppose so, although his talent was there regardless of the role. He confided to George Sanders that he wanted a “normal” life and had fallen in love with a woman for the first time.

Do you think his portrayal of these two characters were responsible in part for arousing his feelings of self-contempt?

Cregar saw himself 100% in those characters, being a Victorian at heart, and because he brought so much subtlety and shading that came from deep within. Zanuck disliked homosexuals and Cregar perhaps thought, professionally,



John Brahm signs lobby cards for interviewer David Del Valle.

that it was a good move to lose the weight and become a leading man. As a star with two major 20th Century-Fox pictures on hand, why risk blackmail or scandal—but this is only my opinion. Laird was a classy fellow and his behavior was always above reproach.

Which of these two films is your favorite?

THE LODGER is my favorite. I am proud of the way it turned out. To have a young man such as you ask me questions about it—after all these years—speaks for itself! [LAUGHS]

We haven’t mentioned it, but I’m also quite fond of your film THE UNDYING MONSTER, which you also made at Fox.

I gave a long interview on tape to some young people from the American Film Institute a few days ago, and I’m afraid I really don’t

remember that one anymore. They asked me lots of questions for hours. All I remember about **THE UNDYING MONSTER** was it was shot during wartime and John Howard and most of my crew got drafted and reported for duty before we were through editing the final product!

NOTES

¹ Evidently, Mr. Brahm is succumbing to a faulty memory here. In fact, Barré Lyndon’s original screenplay contains the description of such a scene.

² Actually, George Harvey Bone’s “dead moods” occur whenever he hears a “sudden, discordant noise”—not a certain piece of music.



JOHN BRAHM VIDEOGRAPHY



Werewolf John Howard hovers above heroine Heather Angel in *THE UNDYING MONSTER*.

THE UNDYING MONSTER

1942, *Sinister Cinema*, OP

This atmospheric werewolf tale was briefly issued by the Oregon-based mail order company in the late 1980s, but was later discontinued.

THE MIRACLE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

1952, *Warner Home Video* 2767, \$19.95 (VHS); *Warner Home Video* 11540, \$34.95 (LD)

This is a dramatization of the real-life story of three poor Portuguese children who gained worldwide attention after claiming to have witnessed a vision of the Virgin Mary. Memorable for its haunting pastoral atmosphere and powerful, apocalyptic climax, in which the doubt of local church officials inspires the Madonna to perform a miracle too terrifying to deny.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE: VOLUME 2

CBS Fox 2452, \$12.98

In addition to "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street," this cassette contains "Time Enough at Last" (11/20/59), perhaps Brahm's most beloved work. This story of bespectacled, bookish bank teller Henry Bemis (Burgess Meredith) has a sting in its tail that stung a generation.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE: VOLUME 6

CBS Fox 2586, \$12.98

Contains the comedic "Mr. Dingle, the Strong" (3/3/61), Brahm's least interesting TZ episode, again starring Burgess Meredith. A two-headed Martian decides to imbue an Everyman with the strength of 300 men, to see how men are affected by delusions of power. The supporting episode

is "Two," starring Charles Bronson and Elizabeth Montgomery.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE: VOLUME 7

CBS Fox 2587, \$12.98

Contains "The Four of Us are Dying" (1/1/60), a dark urban study of a criminal capable of changing the look of his face, who imitates a few of the wrong people on the last night of his life. The excellent cast includes Harry Townes, Ross Martin, Beverly Garland, and Don Gordon. Scripted by Serling, from a story by George Clayton Johnson, and scored by Jerry Goldsmith. Includes "A Passage for Trumpet," starring Jack Klugman.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE: VOLUME 11

CBS Fox 2591, \$12.98

Contains the fascinating "Shadow Play" (5/5/61), written



Brahm's most famous denouement: Burgess Meredith as Henry Bemis in THE TWILIGHT ZONE's "Time Enough at Last."

by Charles Beaumont, and starring Dennis Weaver. A convicted murderer argues against his date with the electric chair on the grounds that the world is his own invention—and that his death will cause the end of the world as everyone knows it. Suspenseful solipsism at its best. Harry Townes of "The Four of Us are Dying" co-stars as the district attorney. Also on the tape is another Beaumont story, the wonderfully scary "Perchance to Dream," starring Richard Conte—directed by Robert Florey (**MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE, THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS**).

THE OUTER LIMITS: ZZZZZZZ

1964, MGM/UA 201829, \$12.98

This episode has much to recommend it—it's magnificently photographed by Conrad Hall, it ventures some poignant com-

ments of the subjects of marriage and grief, and features a mesmerizing performance by Joanna Frank (L.A. LAW's "Sheila Brackman") as a voluptuously human incarnation of a Queen Bee—but its basic synopsis of an attempted insect revolution is too ridiculous for words. The wedding dress scene earns high marks for perversity. A stylistic triumph, but essentially hollow. Originally broadcast 1/27/64.

THE OUTER LIMITS: THE BELLERO SHIELD

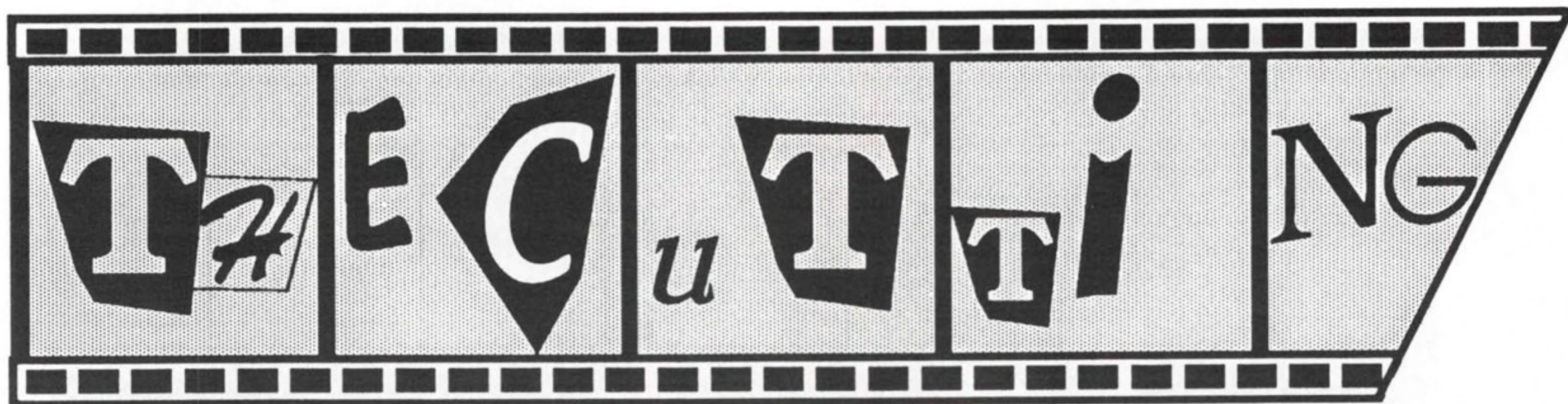
1964, MGM/UA 201575, \$12.98

One of the best episodes of the best science-fiction series ever televised. An imaginative reworking of MACBETH, Martin Landau stars as a scientist who creates a lightbridge between worlds that brings an intelligent alien being (John Hoyt)—protected by an invisible shield connected to its bloodstream—into his troubled

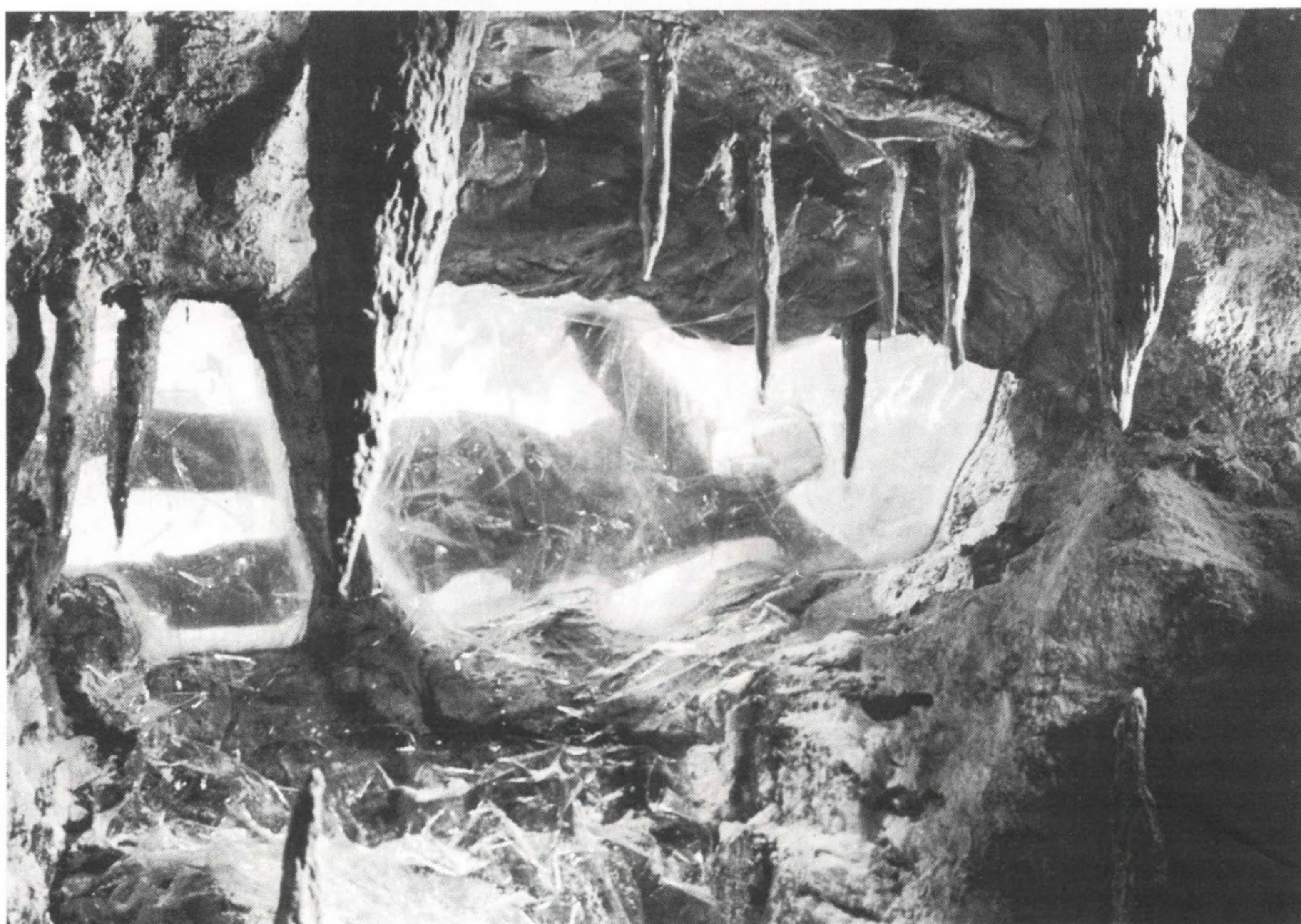
home. The supporting cast is impeccable: Sally Kellerman as Landau's cold-bloodedly ambitious wife, Neil Hamilton as his pompous father ("History forgives great men their murderous wives!"), and Chita Rivera as a peculiar, quiet, barefooted housekeeper. Another triumphant collaboration with Conrad Hall. Originally broadcast 2/10/64. Also available on the laserdisc boxed set THE OUTER LIMITS, VOLUME 2 (MGM/UA ML102679, \$99.98).

Between 1956 and 1967, John Brahm directed over 150 episodes of series television, including some of the best-loved episodes of ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, THE ALFRED HITCHCOCK HOUR, THRILLER (12 episodes), VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E., and THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E.





THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN



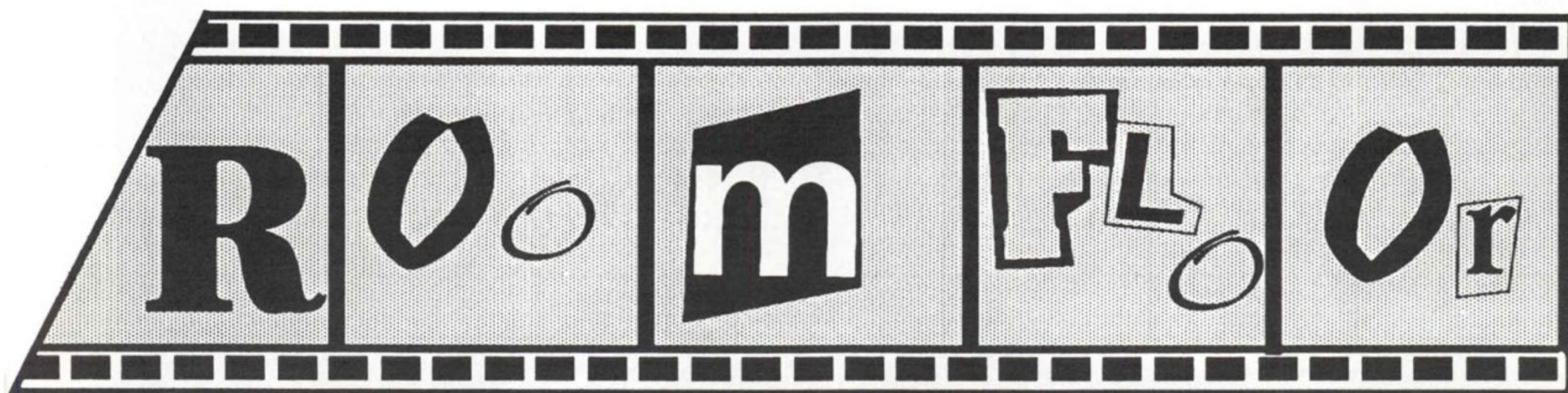
By Tim Lucas

1964, MCA Universal 80544, HF, \$19.95 (VHS)
MCA Universal 40544, D, \$34.98 (LD), 84m
Universal Television Syndication 16mm Print

After returning to Carlstaad, Baron Frankenstein discovers his original creation (Kiwi Kingston) preserved in a mountain glacier.



REDDIE FRANCIS' THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN was the third film in the celebrated Hammer Films series, starring Peter Cushing as that iconoclastic idealist, Baron Frankenstein. Its two predecessors—**THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1957) and **THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1959)—were skillfully directed by Terence Fisher, and had initiated an elaborate serial tapestry that would follow the Baron's



VIDEOS RESTORED AND COMPARED

anti-heroic adventures until 1973's somber **FRANK-ENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL**. Indeed, **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN** is the only film in the series Fisher did not direct—legend has it that Fisher was temporarily relieved of the series as punishment for the commercial failure of **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** (1962)—and it's a rogue entry, orbiting the others like a moon.¹ Scripted by "John Elder" (Anthony Hinds), it does not perpetuate Jimmy Sangster's existing storyline and negates the generic advancements made by Fisher by forcing an ill-advised return to Universal's "Golden Age of Horror."

In many ways, **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN** is a liberal rewrite of Erle C. Kenton's **HOUSE OF FRANK-ENSTEIN** (1944). Here, the Baron himself—rather than a mere disciple (as played in **HOUSE** by Boris Karloff)—returns with his assistant Hans (**COUNT-ESS DRACULA**'s Sandor Eles) to Carlstaad, where he finds his abandoned chateau looted by the local constabulary. (Cushing actually echoes Karloff's line, "Why can't they leave me alone?") In time, the Baron discovers his original Monster (Kiwi Kingston)—a ragged attempt to recreate the look of Jack Pierce's classic squareheaded makeup design—perfectly preserved inside a mountain glacier, attended by a feral deaf-mute girl named Rena (Katy Wild). The Baron gives his Monster renewed life, but its brain has been traumatized by gunfire. A circus caravan comes to town, featuring the mesmerist Zoltan (Peter Woodthorpe), whom the Baron recruits to stimulate the Monster's brain. When public officials order Zoltan out of town for performing without a license, he uses his mesmeric hold over the Monster to exact revenge against the Burgomeister (David Hutcheson) and Chief of Police (Duncan Lamont). (An open question to Zoltan: If you already have control over the Monster, why is it necessary to swing your watch in front of him as you give him later instructions?)

Hammer fans tend to bash this film for its outside status and lack of ambition, but it is well-served by the

offbeat photography of John Wilcox, Don Mingaye's elaborate art direction (much of it also used for Fisher's **THE GORGON**, 1964), and some good performances. Too often reviled simply on the basis of Roy Ashton's inadequate makeup, Kiwi Kingston is one of the most underrated movie monsters ever born of lightning; Kingston—an Australian wrestler—gives an impressively physical performance, from the haunting stance his fallen bandaged body assumes after taking its first steps, to the formidable strength apparent in the Monster's pain-and-alcohol-induced rampage. Also, considering the extent to which Peter Woodthorpe's uneven performance is permitted to foreground the film's second half, it is a tribute to the precision of Peter Cushing's portrayal that the Baron continues to dominate the film while doing little more than signing papers and pacing the floor. As for director Freddie Francis—who has since returned to cinematography with films like David Lynch's **THE ELEPHANT MAN** (1980) and Martin Scorsese's **CAPE FEAR** (1991)—he indulges himself in **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN** with one of the series' most audacious passages, a 12m "pure cinema" flashback [Side 1, 18:35-29:22] that unfolds without a single word of dialogue.

EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN has been brought to laserdisc by MCA Universal with reasonable care. The image is mildly cropped to 1.33:1 and, although many shots are designed to favor the extreme right or left of the screen, the compositions are always visible and coherent. The Eastmancolor has slightly faded, giving the film a more pastel appearance than it had in 1964, and the resolution is appreciably sharper on Side 2, which is presented in CAV. Alas, the enhanced detail has an unfortunate way of exposing Les Bowie's miniatures (the Chateau, the laboratory's lightning conductor, etc.) for what they are. The digital mono soundtrack is crisply recorded and most effective during the rickety lab sequences. The film is followed by a *very American* trailer ("The



The Baron (Peter Cushing) gives life to his creation in EVIL's colorful laboratory scene, sets by Don Mingaye.

Greatest Chiller-Thriller of Them All!"), whose ratio jumps from 1.33:1 to 1.75:1 whenever quivering hyperbole fills the screen. The sleeve lists the film's running time inaccurately at 87m.

MCA Universal's **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN** appears on both tape and disc in its original theatrical version. It supersedes in circulation an alternate TV version, produced in collaboration with the NBC television network in the late 1960s, syndicated prints of which may still be found in the older film libraries of local stations.

NBC acquired the television rights to **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN** in 1966, in a package with two other Hammer productions: Terence Fisher's **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** and Don Sharp's **KISS OF THE VAMPIRE** (1963). All three films were considerably altered for their presentation during the 1967-68 season of "NBC Wednesday Night at the Movies"; after all suggestions of violence had been removed, the censored versions were considered too short for broadcast and so subjected to the worse indignity of being heavily padded with new material, filmed by Universal Television crews at Universal City Studios.

This uncredited material introduced new and superfluous characters, and took ruinous liberties with the original storylines.

KISS OF THE VAMPIRE suffered most of all. NBC decided that it could tolerate no literal suggestions of vampirism, so the film was extensively cut, losing material from virtually all of its best-loved scenes, including its celebrated "bat attack" climax. In this version (retitled **KISS OF EVIL**—eliminating vampirism from the film's very title!), Virginia Gregg and Carl Esmond appeared in a dreary subplot about an aging couple whose only daughter has been seduced into Baron Ravana's coven. It was the first of the films to be broadcast and was shown December 20, 1967. Universal's elimination of the original footage was so thorough that MCA Universal Home Video is said to be having great difficulty in locating an acceptable 35mm print to transfer to tape.

The more genteel **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** lost only the stabbing of a rat-catcher (Patrick Troughton) in its translation to TV fodder, but the film's sensitive pacing was destroyed by 6m of preposterous cutaways to a portly Irish detective (**THE GHOST & MR. CHICKEN**'s Liam Redmond), musing about the Opera House Murders while touring

London's infamous Black Museum. **THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN** gained 14m in its transition to television, mostly due to an outrageous storyline involving Katy Wild's deaf-mute character Rena.

Both versions of the film begin with a pre-credits sequence in Carlstaad, in which a young girl witnesses the theft of her father's corpse as it lies in state. Fleeing into the woods, she encounters Baron Frankenstein, screams, and runs away. One of the subtler charms of Francis' film is Rena's relationship with the monster, holding silent conversations with it as it waits for revival in its glacial tomb, caring for it, relating—Francis implies—to the father in it. The NBC version conveniently forgot this pre-credits sequence by offering a completely different explanation of Rena's trauma, making a shambles of Wild's characterization.

The first of the NBC inserts followed the shots that introduce Rena as an adult, as she nervously makes her way through the festive streets of Carlstaad. Whereas Francis follows Rena into the hands of some taunting young toughs, NBC cuts to the humble office of Dr. Sergedo (Steven Geray), with the arrival of a London-based reporter named David Carrell (Patrick Horgan). Carrell, representing "The London Dispatch," tells Sergedo that he is investigating the theft "last night in Bernheim" of a woodcutter's corpse by Baron Frankenstein, a former resident of Carlstaad; he is seeking information about the Baron's formative exploits. Sergedo refuses to discuss those

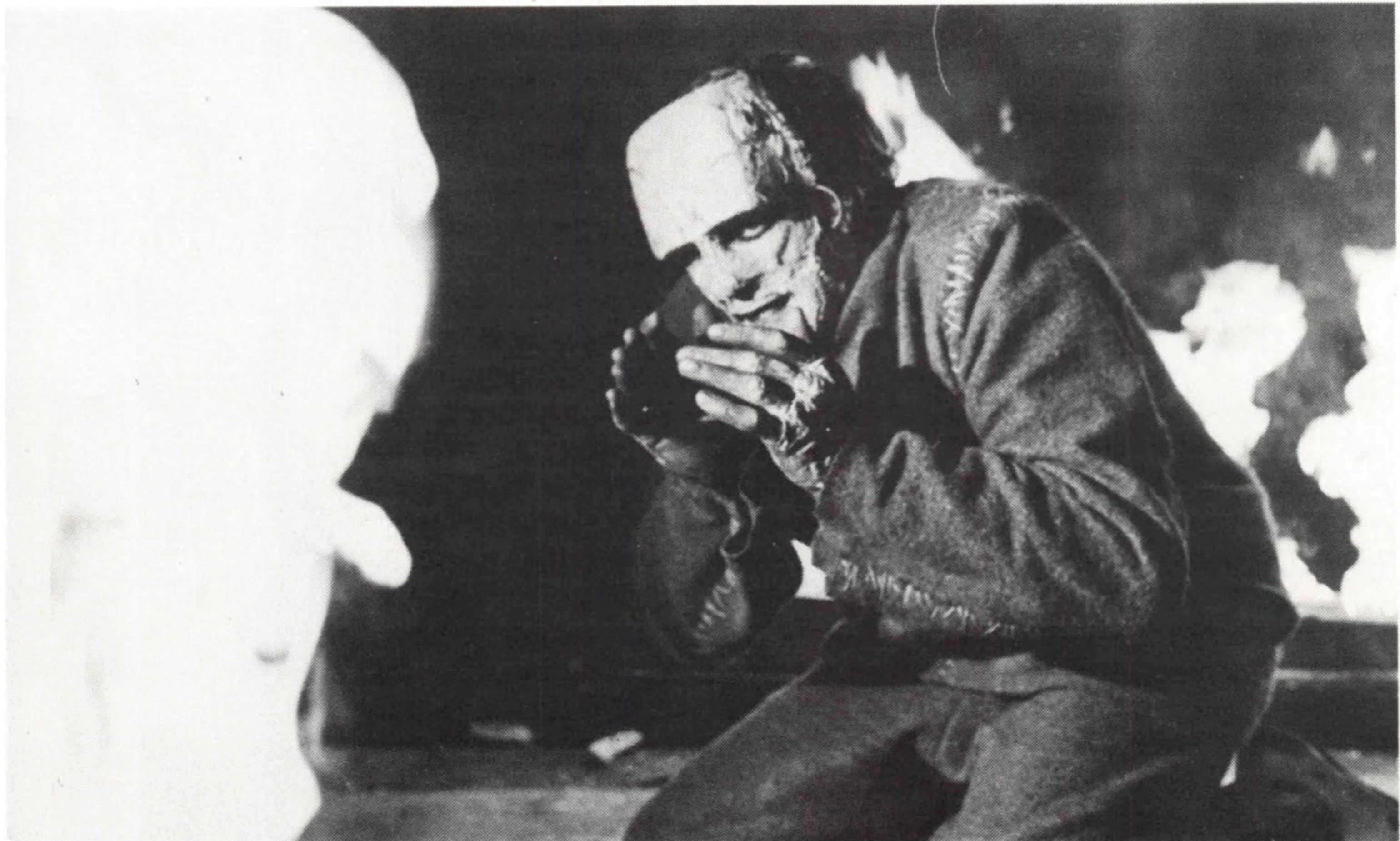
ancient events, which his village hopes to forget. Discouraged, Carrell prepares to leave. Taking each other's leave on the doorstep, the two men see Rena—in actual footage from **EVIL**—being teased by some young toughs. Sergedo confides to Carrell, "She's a deaf-mute; she seems to understand only cruelty." He explains that Rena's "mother is dead, and her father might as well be," and that she was normal until the age of 7, when she was exposed to some unknown shock. All that he knows is that the Baron was somehow responsible. Carrell—who suddenly has a train to catch—growls that he wishes he had more time in Carlstaad to investigate this fascinating story, and walks out of the movie.

This cutaway was followed with the Baron and Hans arriving in Carlstaad, eliminating their brief conversation about his banishment—which contains conflicting information.

The next insert occurred during the extended flashback sequence, after the Baron wakes in his laboratory to find his newly-made Monster missing and terrorizing the countryside. After an exterior shot of the Baron running about, looking for signs of his creation, the NBC version cuts to a young girl (Tracy Stratford), singing to her doll in a quiet clearing. Martha (Maria Palmer), her mother, appears and tells the young Rena that it's getting very late.

"Oh, can't I stay... just a little *vile*?" the child pleads, hideously exaggerating her mittle-European accent.

Australian wrestler Kiwi Kingston as the Monster.



The mother relents and leaves Rena to play with her doll. We cut to a shot of the Monster's flat-iron shoes as they drag through the dirt. After an inappropriate shot from the Monster's POV as he passes through some leafy branches, Rena looks up at the giant intruder, screams, and runs away. This is followed by a shot of the Monster's feet obviously trampling the doll, crushing its head to a powder.

Meanwhile at their small country cottage, Rena's father Johann (William Phipps) startles Martha by rushing inside and grabbing his rifle. He explains that his goats have been killed. Martha assumes this to be a wolf's doing. "Not a wolf," Johann insists. "I have heard stories of the Baron Frankenstein and the monster he created..." At that moment, Rena comes through the door and runs into her mother's arms, unable to speak.

The scene then cuts back to original **EVIL** footage, as the Baron discovers a number of slaughtered sheep (presumably Johann's "goats"), the Monster feeding on raw veal in the distance. The glimpses of blood in this sequence were also eliminated by NBC.

The next NBC insert follows the end of the flashback, in which the Monster is shot off the mountain top into the glacier. Johann and Martha have summoned Dr. Sergedo to examine Rena. He cannot explain the loss of her voice. Somehow, Johann has deduced that she encountered the Monster in the woods. "She had a fright that do some-

thing to her mind we do not understand," he surmises. The scene ends with Johann leaving for church, explaining that he will pray for God to place a curse on Baron Frankenstein and his blasphemous creation. This cutaway was followed by the fade-in as the Baron concludes his flashback story... implying that Rena's story—events at which he was not present—has been a part of his reminiscence!

As the film resumes present tense, Rena's storyline is brought up-to-date with one final, hilarious episode. Dr. Sergedo has been prompted by his sighting of Rena to visit her, and he finds Johann in a self-pitying alcoholic haze. He tells Sergedo that Rena is "never home anymore."

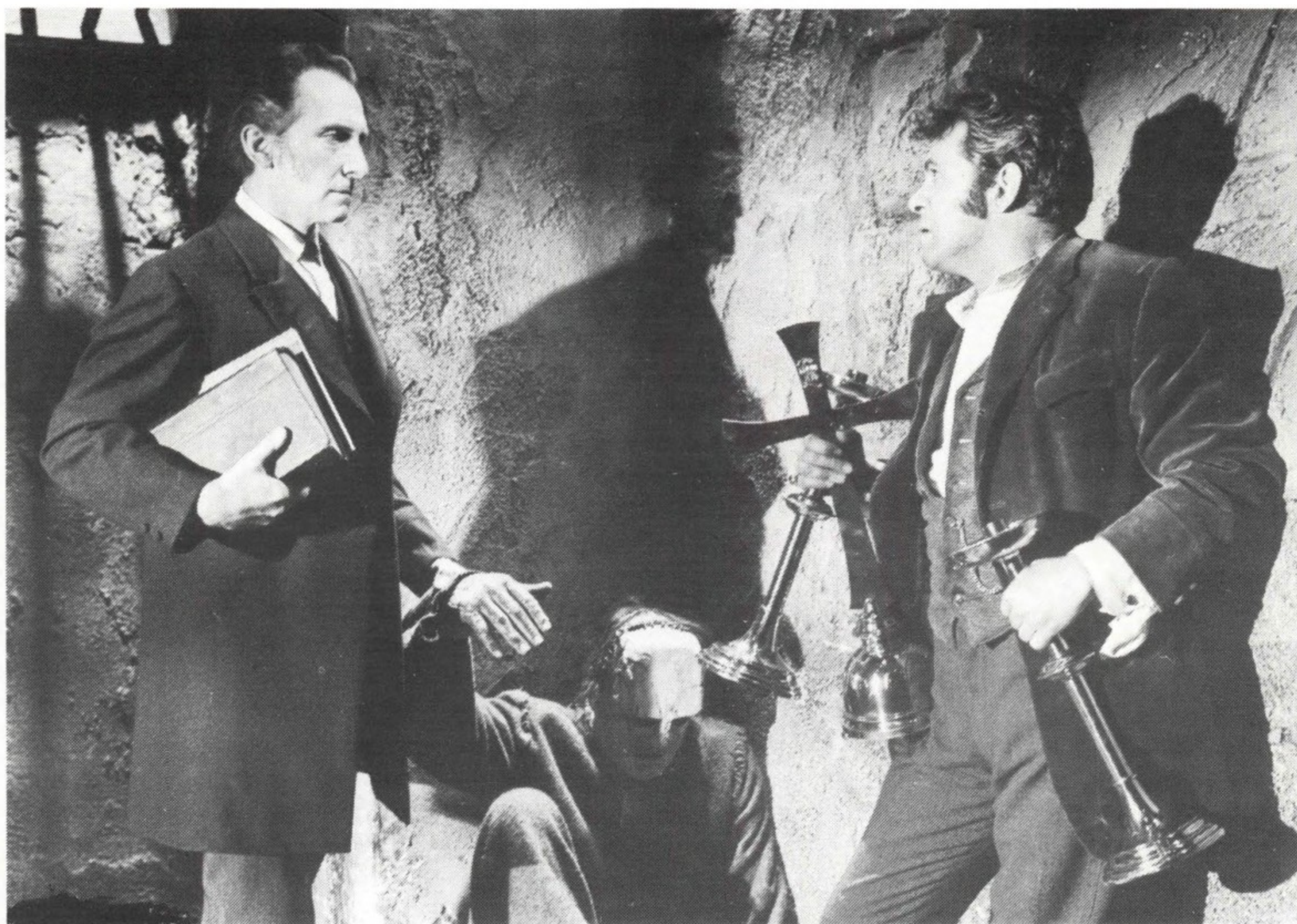
"I want to take her with me to Vienna," Sergedo announces. "There is a doctor named *Freud*... he might be able to help her!"

Johann is puzzled, as well he might be. "Why now, Doctor? After all these years?"

Sergedo tells him that he was reminded of Rena's case after hearing that Baron Frankenstein had returned to Carlstaad. (This point is consistent with the Hammer plot, since the Baron has publicly attacked the Burgomeister the night before.) Johann tells the doctor that he should look for Rena in the mountains. He then shares with Sergedo a dream he had of Rena, shortly after the death of his wife several years ago, in which his daughter appeared to him and said, "That creature can't hurt me anymore... I'm not

The deaf-mute Rena (Katy Wild) cares for the pathetic cause of her childhood trauma.





The Baron confronts Zoltan the hypnotist (Peter Woodthorpe) with his stolen goods and the blood on his subject's hands.

afraid anymore." Johann is convinced, if Rena could speak, that this is exactly what she would tell him.

"Take her to Vienna," Johann urges Sergedo. "Do anything you want." And, pouring himself another drink, he collapses. The NBC inserts end here, with Rena's story taken to fanciful extremes and left unfulfilled.

Violence and gore were also removed from the film by NBC. The original opening titles sequence—presented over footage of the Baron sweating over the removal of a heart from a fresh cadaver—unfold in the NBC version over a simple freeze-frame of the refrigeration apparatus in the Baron's laboratory. All shots of the heart itself were eliminated from the subsequent sequence, in which the Baron and Hans use elaborate mechanical means to restore its beat. When a meddling priest crashes the experiment—literally—the NBC print includes only a few frames of the heart as it spills onto the floor. The feature version provides the viewer with a good, hard look.

Further changes were made to soften the film's alleged impact. When the Monster invades the Burgomeister's bedchamber and throws the old nightcapped crook across the room, NBC inserted a

peculiar cutaway—to Zoltan tossing in his sleep, under Rena's watchful gaze—just after the Burgomeister hits the floor; when the scene resumed, nothing had been deleted during the course of the cutaway, which had been inserted simply to make the assault less relentless. NBC also reduced the number of times the Monster then slammed the Burgomeister against the wall, from six to one.

The film's final instance of violence—the Monster's impaling of Zoltan with an iron spear—appeared intact in NBC prints, but a follow-up shot of Zoltan staggering backwards against a wall was relieved of several frames to condense his agonies.

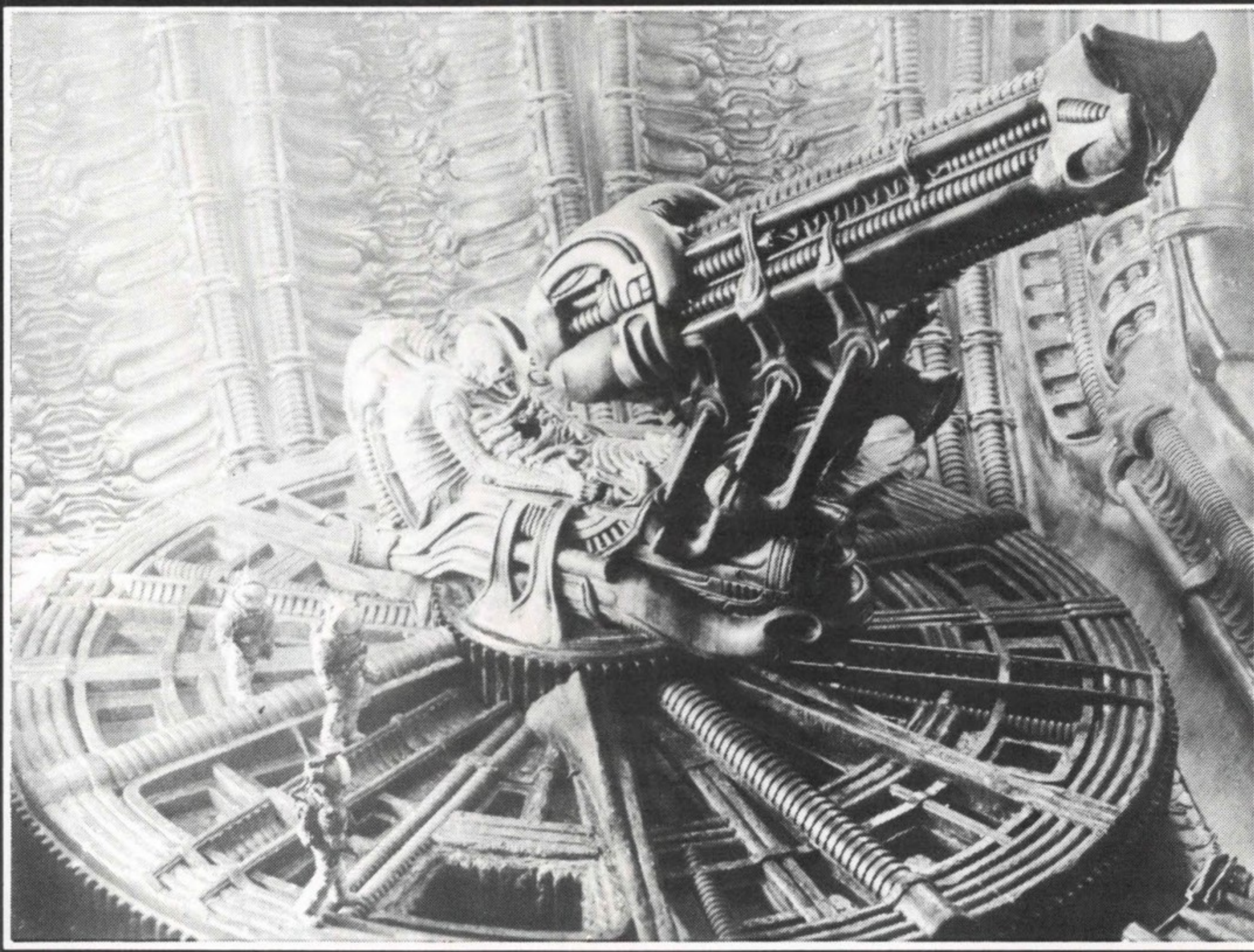
Both versions of the film end the same way, with Rena and Hans escaping from the exploding chateau—the Baron presumably still inside. How things went for Rena in Vienna we will (or *vill*) never know.

¹ When Fisher resumed the series with **FRANKEN-STEIN CREATED WOMAN** (1966), no allusions were made to the Baron's escape from apparent death at the end of this film; **WOMAN** is not a sequel to **EVIL**, but rather a "10 Years Later..." continuation of **REVENGE**.



By
Tim
Lucas

LASERDISCS



Ridley Scott's own children posed as Tom Skerritt, Veronica Cartwright, and John Hurt to lend scale to H.R. Giger's "Space Jockey" in ALIEN.

ALIEN

1979, FoxVideo (Image Entertainment)
1090-85, LB/D/S/SS, \$99.95 (CAV)

After catching **ALIEN 3** on its opening weekend at the local multiplex last summer, my first impulse was to pay a return visit—to Ridley Scott's original **ALIEN** on video. My scratching of that particular itch quickly confirmed what I had known for years, that CBS/Fox Video's pan-and-scan transfer of this Panavision release was all but unwatchable. I hadn't viewed the tape in a couple of years because I heard that this three-disc "Special Wide Screen Collector's Edition" was in the works (or at least in the pipeline); such knowledge was, for many of **ALIEN**'s admirers—myself included—tantamount to a temporary restraining order. Waiting for this letter-boxed transfer has been like standing in a very long line at the movies. Now that this deluxe three-disc presentation has finally arrived, it must be said that,

however fascinating and definitive and overwhelming the supplementary "Collector's Section" may be, it offers nothing that eclipses the delivery, at long last, of a watchable **ALIEN** to the home viewer. The film covers the first two discs; it contains 29 laconically-titled chapter stops ("The Planet," "Ash"), and the side breaks are pleasingly placed.

Incredible though it sounds, most viewers under the age of 30 have never seen **ALIEN** in a theatrical setting, or in its original widescreen ratio. As this transfer shows, Derek Vanlint's Panavision photography makes exceptional use throughout of the entire frame, and the suspenseful direction of Scott—whose reputation is justifiably inseparable from his penchant for obsessively detailed visuals—is never less than wholly dependent on his widescreen canvas. A good case in point appears in Chapter 15, beginning with Frame 3626, wherein a shot of Ripley (Sigourney Weaver)'s

search for "Kane's Son" with an air density detector is augmented with an eerie music cue from composer Jerry Goldsmith; only on this disc do we see the alarming intrusion of a flickering shadow on the extreme screen right—innocently cast, we soon learn, by Parker (Yaphet Kotto). The scene is inconsequential on its own terms, but in this format, it is restored to one of many components used throughout this portion of the movie to jangle the nerves of the viewer. By the same token, the restored width of image is reminiscent of some forgotten *frissons* of the theatrical experience: the wonderful shot of the egg chamber, widened here to show the hellish hatchery extending under a blue carpet of laser-light into infinity; the full, towering majesty of the phallic "Space Jockey" transmitter; and the full array of dangling chains in the rain-filled room where Brett (Harry Dean Stanton) meets his end, any one of which might be the dangling tail of the xenomorph.

The transfer is perfectly framed at 2.35:1—with the memorably designed main titles unfolding slightly less widely—and fully captures the flavor and impact of the theatrical experience, in miniature. The source print is clean and apparently flawless, with the exception of one or two effects shots (probably completed "under the wire") of the Nostromo's planetary approach [1/18561-18847, for example], where speckles and other crud are fleetingly apparent. The set is packaged in a hinged box, designed to complement last year's **ALIENS** boxed set, and contains a colorful gatefold insert featuring chapter indices, salutary greetings from Scott, screenwriter Dan O'Bannon, and conceptual artist H.R. Giger, and some very capable liner notes by Michael Matessino.

Another plus of this presentation is the digital remastering of the film's highly manipulative stereo

surround soundtrack. The harsh winds of the alien planet, the shriek of the facehugger as it leaps from the egg onto Kane's helmet, Ash's laser knife as it halves Kane's helmet to expose the monster for the first time, the cry of feedback as the Alien opens its arms to greet Dallas (Tom Skerritt), the nerve-scraping sound of the iris-ing air hatches as they open and close... there isn't a single sound in the bunch that doesn't make the viewer want to jump out of his skin. During an interview featured on the bonus "Collector's Section" disc, Ridley Scott tells CINEFEX editor Don Shay that the only film he watched attentively while preparing for **ALIEN** was William Friedkin's **THE EXORCIST**. It shows, and it can be heard, too.

The "Collector's Section"—the work of Michael Matessino and David C. Fein, the talented architects of the **ALIENS** supplement—is a monolithic achievement; thanks to this imposing postscript, to view this boxed set in its entirety requires (by my count) an *eight-hour* commitment. The separate disc arranges its background materials chronologically, into Pre-Production (6 chapters), Production (10 chapters), and Post-Production (5 chapters), with a bibliography at the close to encourage additional reading.

The Pre-Production materials begin with a look at several portions of Dan O'Bannon's original screenplay, augmented with on-spec production art by Chris Foss; their Egyptian approach to the alien culture might have resulted in a bizarre amalgamation of **IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE** and Erich von Daniken's **CHARIOTS OF THE GODS?**, and helps one to appreciate how incalculably **ALIEN** was benefitted by the cold, evil, biomechanical designs of Swiss artist H.R. Giger. Profiles of Scott and Giger follow, as well as a look at Scott's assembly of his cast

and crew. With pleasurable momentum, the materials combine to demonstrate how O'Bannon's frankly derivative script was considered unproduceable until, in the wake of **STAR WARS'** success, it was conceptually enlarged and repackaged by producers Gordon Carroll, David Giler and Walter Hill into something significantly more than it was.

The Production materials allow for the minute study of Ron Cobb's remarkable production designs for the Nostromo (and its many costumes and props), and Giger's development of the hauntingly organic-looking derelict ship. Subsequent chapters (consisting of silent 16mm documentation, commentary, and production stills) are devoted to the filming of the egg chamber sequence, and the creation, building, and filming of the three life stages of the xenomorph: the face-hugger, the chest-burster, and the adult Alien. The latter chapter includes a fascinatingly inept outtake of Lambert (Veronica Cartwright)'s death, in which entirely too much of the Alien is shown, walking **XTRO**-like on all fours. The egg chamber material is particularly involving, as it concentrates not solely on the preparation of the special effects, but also on the creation of the shocking montage as the embryonic alien leaps out to engulf Kane's helmet. (Watching the film, I stopped this scene to examine its individual frames in CAV—but the supplement is far more informative.) Matessino and Fein should be congratulated for resisting what must have been a powerful temptation to make this supplement a SPFX extravaganza; it is, but it's also generous in its respectful attention to **ALIEN**'s direction and overall visualization.

The Post-Production materials begin with seven scenes deleted from the final cut—fully edited, stereo-mixed, and letterboxed—

including the legendary "Cocoon" sequence, which actually looks more like James Cameron's **ALIENS** than any other scene in the picture. It's a powerful sequence, and one wishes it had been retained, along with the footage of Ripley and Parker catching a glimpse of Brett's death (to which the final cut actually makes reference, as Parker recalls: "Whatever it was, it was *big*.") One suspects, from reading between the lines, that there exist still more outtakes, withheld from the supplement, but it is a rare viewer who will cry for more. Additional chapters document the film's theatrical release and promotion—including three trailers and publicity materials from the US and other countries. A conclusive chapter reiterates, all in one location, the previously shown production art of Chris Foss, Jean "Moebius" Giraud, Ron Cobb, and H.R. Giger.

No mutiny for this bounty.

BLACKMAIL

1929, *Voyager/Criterion CC1297L*, D/MA, \$49.95, 84m 17s

Alfred Hitchcock's tenth film is the story of a young tease (Anny Ondra) who ditches her Scotland Yard detective boyfriend (John Congren), in favor of the more sophisticated company of a young artist (Cyril Ritchard). When the artist misinterprets her playfulness and forces his affections on her, she retaliates by stabbing him to death. The detective is assigned to the case and conceals evidence of her presence at the murder scene, but is found out by a paroled felon (Donald Calthrop) who decides to blackmail the couple for a spell of easy living.

This modest storyline is stretched to feature length with a series of textbook exercises in stylistic suspense, including several

images and themes prophetic of Hitchcock's later masterpieces. The foyer of Ondra's home—attached to her father's tobacconist shop—is identical to the foyer of the Bates home in **PSYCHO** (itself attached to a family business), and the key murder is a stabbing that takes place behind a curtain. The exciting climax is a grand pursuit through the dwarfing marvels of the British Museum (looking ahead to the sight-seeing chases that climaxed **SABOTEUR** and **NORTH BY NORTHWEST**), which eventually leads to a plummet from the rooftops (*à la* **VERTIGO**). Punctuating these set-pieces are individual shots, fascinating in their own right, such as a zoom into the mouth-piece of a telephone, or a telephone conversation with two people—a town apart—speaking at artful angles within the same, unsplit frame. The film was originally filmed silent, which explains these starkly visual emphases, but Hitchcock acquired Vitaphone sound equipment before it went into release and reshot numerous sequences, making **BLACKMAIL** the first British "talkie." The advanced and adventurous qualities of its early soundtrack are what make the film so enduring. Not only did Hitchcock make extensive use of subjective or psychological sound (eg., the stabbing recurrence of the word "knife" at the breakfast table), but Ondra's entire performance was lip-synched—*live!*—to the dialogue spoken off-camera by actress Joan Barry. In a delightfully ironic touch, the guilt-ridden hero and heroine of this sound-conscious film are condemned at the story's end to a lifetime of silence! Hitchcock made good films before this (such as **THE LODGER**, 1925), but **BLACKMAIL** was his first inarguably special one.

The film, presented with 22

chapter marks, looks rough in places but is remarkably clean, overall; the soundtrack is crackly, but sufficiently well-recorded for the viewer to tell the live-sound passages from the overdubs, which have a much more primitive character. The right analog track features lively reminiscences from 91 year-old screenwriter Charles Bennett—who makes some astute criticisms of the work, while also expounding on its earlier stage presentation with Tallulah Bankhead. In an amazing aside, Bennett recalls how one of his early screenplays—**BULLDOG DRUMMOND'S BABY**, no less—evolved into **THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH**! Bennett is joined by Stuart Birnbaum (the producer of an unfilmed 20th Century Fox remake of **BLACKMAIL**), who—equipped with a stale commentary by Laurent Bouzereau—restates all the familiar Hitchcock anecdotes and legends, tells you where to look and what to see (sometimes fatuously), and tosses in some inappropriate vocal impersonations along the way. Birnbaum/Bouzereau are most interesting while relating Michael Powell's statements (in his biography **A LIFE IN MOVIES**) that he did some uncredited work on the film's screenplay and conceived the British Museum sequence, but it is frustrating that Bennett could neither confirm or deny these claims.

While *Voyager* has not included the expected supplementary material—namely, Hitchcock's original silent version, or at least the original material displaced by the sound footage—this single disc presentation includes two short, playful, even randy, glimpses of Hitchcock at work on the film. The first is Anny Ondra's sound test, which reveals a strong but not unlistenable German accent, before Hitch tells an offcolor joke that

reduces her to giggles of embarrassment. (Birnbaum pre-empts the surprise of this snippet by "performing" it in the midst of Side 1, accents and all.) The second clip, titled "Directing the Kiss," is a silent home movie of Hitch pretending to demonstrate the kiss he wants Cyril Ritchard to give Ondra—gently lifting her lips to his own, then sticking out his tongue! The supplement ends with **THE VOICE OF THE SCREEN**, a 9m 45s industrial film produced in October 1926 by the Vitaphone Company, demonstrating how talkies are made and projected.

CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF

1961, MCA Universal 40543, D, \$34.98, 90m

Terence Fisher directed this robust, colorful, and unorthodox Hammer Films production, among the most viscerally satisfying of all werewolf movies. A series of strange circumstances place wealthy landowner Don Alfredo (Clifford Evans) in charge of Léon, a bastard child he raises as his own son, whose lycanthropic nature becomes apparent as the boy reaches puberty. Eventually, the love and supervision of his adoptive family helps to suppress the youngster's appetite for blood. The adult Léon (Oliver Reed, previously one of Hammer's contract "toughs") leaves home to work in a winepress and, once away from the influence of a loving home and lured by the temptations of false affection, experiences a deadly recurrence of his animal tendencies.

Loosely based on Guy Endore's 1933 novel *THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS*, the locale is herein changed to Spain, where the story is allowed

*Oliver Reed shows an uncanny resemblance to child actor Justin Walters, his "younger self" in **CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF**.*



to begin at its beginning—with the incidental imprisonment of a starving beggar (Richard Wordsworth of **THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT**) at the hands of a sinister Marqués (Anthony Dawson). In his dungeon cell, the prisoner is fed daily by the jailer's mute daughter over a period of twenty years; she grows to ripe womanhood as he regresses to a state of hairy animalism. When the young woman (Yvonne Romain) repels the carnal attentions of the aged Marqués, she is thrown into the cell with the animal-man, who rapes her. When she is freed, she stabs the Marqués to death and flees into the woods, where she lives as an animal herself through the early months of her pregnancy. She is rescued by Don Alfredo (who, in one of the film's few miscalculations, somehow narrates the preceding events, which he could not possibly have known), whose housekeeper Teresa (Hira Talfrey) cares for her until she dies in childbirth. Léon's birth blasphemously coincides with the precise hour of Christ's birth on Christmas Day, and the baptismal font bubbles angrily at the moment of his baptism. Despite the free-handed changes of names and locale, many of these details remain essentially true to Endore, although the novel emphasizes aspects of the story that the cinema could not handle at this time as explicitly—namely bastardy, blasphemy (Endore's rapist was a priest, not an imprisoned beggar), and sexuality (the Spanish couple are lovers in the novel, not master and servant—though a loving relationship is clearly implied).

The script by "John Elder" (aka Anthony Hinds) is unique for its arch-conservative depiction of werewolfery as a curse received for the blasphemous circumstances of one's birth, and for its literal

equation of lycanthropy and the libido. The imprisoned beggar who sires Léon is portrayed as appetite incarnate, and the young Léon's awakening to his own nature occurs during a hunting lesson, when he compulsively tastes the blood of a felled squirrel—which he describes as "warm" and "sweet," like mother's milk. After the false affection of a prostitute unleashes his inner wolf at a brothel one moonlit Saturday night, Léon spends the next evening—Sunday—recovering in the arms of the appropriately-named Christina (Catherine Feller), the truth and chastity of whose love—which she promises to consecrate in holy matrimony—actually suppresses his transformation during that evening's full moon. It is one of the most emphatic expressions of Fisher's recurring theme of the symbiotic bond between the monstrous and the spiritual.

Fisher and Hinds artfully underpin the story of Léon's life with a reverberation of blasphemy, so mild by today's standards that it must actually be called to attention; it commences with the beggar wandering into town, curious why the church bells are tolling when *it is not a Sunday*. Church bells also ring as Léon is born on the night of a full moon, and he is ultimately shot by Don Alfredo with a silver bullet in another belltower, a placement which cures the curse not only with silver but also with holy symmetry. By the same token, the film takes great relish in breaking certain narrative conventions—including the fact that Reed, the film's star and the story's focus, is withheld from the screen until halfway through the story, the first scene on Side 2 of this laserdisc pressing. Roy Ashton's superbly designed and wholly convincing werewolf makeup—aided in no small way by Reed's ferocious

performance—is reserved for the grand finale, and then revealed only in short, powerful glimpses.

This is one of Hammer's most ravishing films, and MCA Universal's disc brings it to life with only minor reservations. Benjamin Frankel's underrated score benefits enormously from its digital presentation, particularly the heightened clarity of the magical glockenspiel patterns during the transformation sequences. Although photographed by Arthur Grant at 1.66, only the opening and closing titles are presented that way (in a soft-edged, *almost furred*, matte); the film's original Technicolor credit has been literally blacked-out during the main titles, as domestic prints were struck in Eastmancolor. The cropped 1.33 image loses none of its compositional strength, but the crisp image appears subtly softened by its slight enlargement within the frame. The sleeve reports a 91m length, but this version—exactly 90m, like MCA Universal's recent \$14.98 cassette re-release—is complete and uncut. When **CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF** played in American theaters in 1961, it ran only 88m and was lacking its most gruesome footage, including some minor details leading to the rape, the multiple stabbing of the Marqués, the gored goats, the savaged throat of the prostitute, and the shooting of Léon in the belltower, after which blood jets in a pulsing stream from his gaping wound—all of which are included here. (The blood is too cosmetically bright to be believable, but its uses are nonetheless effective.) British prints, furthermore, were deprived of a single shot of the Marqués picking at the syphilitic sores on his face—which can be accessed at Side 1, 20:02-20:12!

The main titles are contained



The mischievous Harpies prevent food from being brought to blind Phineas (Patrick Troughton) in this twilight highlight from JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS.

in an unlisted Chapter 0, followed by 20 separate chapter breaks, including one for an original theatrical trailer. Alas, the trailer—only 1 min in length—is dark, color-faded, and looks like it's gone through a blender. On the plus side, it is presented in the 1.66 ratio and includes the historically-curious Technicolor logo.

JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

1963, Voyager/Criterion CC1303L, D/MA, \$99.98 (1/CLV, 2-4/CAV), 103m 48s

The Voyager Company's deluxe "Criterion Collection" release of **JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS**—by common consensus, Ray

Harryhausen's greatest work—manages to eclipse even the outstanding results of the Pioneer Special Editions. Unlike the RCA Columbia cassette transfer, a pallid affair that presents some crucial day-for-night sequences in broad daylight, this Voyager set features a new digital transfer culled from the best elements of two existing archival interpositives. Aside from a hairline scratch during the skeleton fight, the materials appear to be virtually flawless. (How satisfying to see Nancy Kovack's Medea perform her exotic dance once again, limned in luminous golds and greens!) Furthermore, Voyager has painstakingly restored the film's original day-for-night schemata; after a decade of being

unhappily wedded to RCA Columbia's stale cassette transfer, audiences can once again appreciate the fact that some of the film's most magical scenes (the unveiling of the Argos figurehead, the second appearance of the Harpies, Jason's slaying of the Hydra) occur in twilight.

Also, Voyager finally directs the focus of supplementary attention away from the orchestra pit (as favored by Pioneer) to center stage: the stop-motion artistry of Harryhausen himself, who contributes a running commentary on the right analog channel that covers his early inspirations, his previous and pursuant films, his professional joys and disappointments, and—despite his well-known reluctance to

reveal too much about his techniques—a welcome degree of detail about how many shots and effects were achieved.

Despite its overall value and importance, the commentary track must be taken to task on a few counts. Harryhausen and Bruce Eder make a point of complimenting **JASON** at the unfair expense of the Italian *pepla*. Harryhausen inaugurates the discussion by stating during the main titles that the “Italian muscleman-type films... are not really the essence of Mythology any more than Arabic fantasies are supposed to be the ‘girlie’ shows they staged in Hollywood.” One might infer from this statement that he hadn’t seen the best of these films, but the facts of the film itself suggest otherwise. **JASON**’s major predecessors were Pietro Francisci’s **HERCULES** [*La fatica di Ercole*, “The Labors of Hercules,” 1957] and Riccardo Freda’s **THE GIANTS OF THESALY** [*I giganti della Tessaglia*, 1960], which also covered the saga of the Golden Fleece. **JASON**’s vigorous and painterly *mise en scène* owes a great deal to the Italian *pepla*, and **HERCULES** in particular—which, it should be admitted, tackles the Jason myth with a similar degree of free license. The cloaked vision of Hera (Honor Blackman) that appears to Pelias (Douglas Wilmer) in the temple sequence is virtually identical to the portrayal of the Sibyl (Lydia Alfonsi) in **HERCULES**—ominously silhouetted beside a marble column. The luminous green lighting inside the Hydra’s cave appears to have been influenced by Mario Bava’s garish lighting schemes in **HERCULES** and many other *pepla*. During the “Talós” episode, Harryhausen admits that the Talós of the myths—a lifesized figure that stepped into flames, made his metallic body red hot, and embraced sailors to death—was

rejected as “distasteful” and refashioned with a nod to the Colossus of Rhodes—which figures prominently in **GIANTS** and also, needless to say, Sergio Leone’s **THE COLOSSUS OF RHODES** [*Il Colosso di Rodi*, 1959], in which a different ship is shown sailing to its doom between the land-straddling legs of a towering Colossus.

As for Bruce Eder, he acclaims **JASON** as “the first literate treatment of the Greek myths” in cinema; while his liner notes make the advisable correction of including Mario Camerini’s colorful and supremely moving **ULYSSES** [*Ulisse*, 1955] in that sweeping declaration, Eder’s commentary also shows a bias against the *pepla*. He rightly praises Nigel Green’s lusty portrayal of Hercules, but does so at the expense of Steve Reeves’ embodiment of the role, and he remarks during the “Hydra” sequence that **HERCULES** “concentrated on the human elements” of the Golden Fleece saga; unfairly, this remark makes the earlier film sound unimaginative, and it is also untrue, conveniently forgetting the fantastic sequences of the ape men and the giant lizard that guards the mythic pelt.

Furthermore, when the two commentators detail the subsequent commercial ups and downs of Harryhausen’s career, their explanations mostly ring shallow and untrue. Audiences of the ’60s were too interested in the space program, they say; later, audiences weren’t interested enough in the space program. In time, audiences were ready for fantasy again; unfortunately, after **STAR WARS**, the only fantasy they were buying was space-related. These excuses do not take into account the most important factors—namely, the overall failure of these productions to attract big-name stars and gifted directors, the failure of Columbia Pictures and Warner Bros. to promote films like **THE FIRST MEN IN**

THE MOON and **THE VALLEY OF GWANGI** and, ultimately, the miserable quality of films like **SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER**. When audiences embraced **THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD** and **CLASH OF THE TITANS**, it wasn’t because fickle audiences were suddenly “ready for fantasy,” but because Schneer and Harryhausen came through with the goods, and their distributors knew how to sell them. End of rebuttal.

The supplementary portion of this two-disc set consists of 20 chapters and should be commended for bracketing not only **JASON**, but much of Harryhausen’s earlier and later career; producers Curtis Wong and Bruce Eder gain clear advantage by having access to materials unrequested by Pioneer’s Special Editions, not to mention Warner Home Video’s basic issues of **THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS** and **GWANGI**. The supplement includes test footage from Harryhausen’s unproduced **THE ELEMENTALS** (in which the animator is carried away by a winged precursor of **JASON**’s Harpies); **JASON** pre-production drawings, casting notes, memos, records, and Columbia’s badly hand-tinted lobby cards (including one of a Caucasian Talós with brown loin cloth!); fascinating background material on the “Hydra” and “Skeltons” sequences; the discarded original title sequence for **JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE** (cut short of its entirety, but still an amazing detail); Harryhausen rarities from the Forrest J. Ackerman collection, including his cover art for 4SJ’s early zine **IMAGINATION**; and studies of various miniature props from Harryhausen’s early “monster on the loose” movies. Trailers (courtesy of Bill Longden’s SF Rush “Trailers on Tape” collections) are provided for five Harryhausen features, but the trailers for **THE 7TH VOYAGE OF**

SINBAD and **JASON** itself, unfortunately, are re-release material. Considering that **JASON** was not a commercial success in its initial release, it would have been useful to remind the world of how poorly it was originally promoted—*quite* poorly, judging from those tinted lobbies! Voyager has also provided an *unlisted* Chapter 50, which reprises portions of the “Skeleton Fight” sequence minus cropping, allowing the viewer to see exactly how the models were positioned in front of a 1.33 rear projection screen.

As for the sleeve design, it should be mentioned that the cover photo doesn't convey any of the exciting color and presence of the magnificent “Hydra” scene as it appears on the disc itself. And whoever thought of including a “Voyage Map” in the gatefold deserves a raise.

JAWS 2

1978, MCA Universal 41367,
LB/D, \$34.98, 116m 6s

Jeannot Szwarc (**BUG, SOMEWHERE IN TIME**) directed this sequel to Steven Spielberg's 1975 blockbuster, which finds the seaway Sheriff Brody (Roy Scheider) once again confronted with a series of shark attacks at Amity Beach. Brody's adversarial relationship with Mayor Vaughn (Murray Hamilton) and his Chamber of Commerce goons is given some added spice here by Joseph Mascolo's solid casting as an influential real estate agent, who also happens to employ Brody's wife Ellen (Lorraine Gary). After a series of seaside mishaps and disappearances, Brody is fired for frightening tourists with “unwarranted” shark warnings and a group of teenagers—including Brody's own two sons—embark on an early morning sailing party, a floating banquet for you-know-who.

The presentation of **JAWS 2** on laserdisc shows that the first half (Side 1) really doesn't float; the nondescript screenplay, thinking “commercial,” too often uses the important concerns of the adult characters as a background to the mindless dialogues of the teenage supporting cast (which includes Keith Gordon, in his first film appearance). These teen roles are so colorlessly written and embodied that it's virtually impossible to tell, in the end, who has been eaten. The film's second half (Side 2), however, is surprisingly gripping, with dull dialogue replaced by riveting action as shallow summer fun succumbs to horror and suspense. The mechanical shark seems to be functioning better throughout this production, and—to give credit where it is due—Szwarc's film provides more memorable shock images and appearances by the eating machine itself than are found in its classic predecessor. The helicopter rescue sequence is especially good, and John Williams' score (which thankfully treads very little on previously covered ground) plays more suspensefully than his previous outing. It stumbles on the finish line: unless Amity Beach has changed coasts, the film ends with the sun setting in the East.

The 2.35:1 Panavision frame is herein letterboxed at 2.40 and looks consistently well-composed; some bad pressings have been reported, but ours looked in excellent shape. The chapter sequencing is peculiar; for some reason, the actors' credits in the main titles are contained in an *unlisted* Chapter 0, with Chapter 1 commencing with the underwater discovery of the sunken Orca and the subsequent credits. 20 chapters in all are listed. The digital mono sound is fine and, unlike MCA Universal's **JAWS** disc, contains no re-recorded “home

video version” music, though several recognizable source recordings are present.

LOLITA

1961, Voyager/Criterion CC1276L,
D/LB, \$59.95, 152m 58

The black comedy that flowered in Stanley Kubrick's **DR. STRANGELOVE** can be seen coming into bloom in **LOLITA**, his witty adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel about a literary scholar's tortured obsession with a 15 year-old “nymphet.” Although granted sole credit for the screenplay, only 20% of Nabokov's actual script (published in 1974) made it to the screen, though the Great Man later gave the production his sincere endorsement. The blessing was deserved. While this film should never be confused as a substitute for the experience of reading **LOLITA**, it is surely one of the intoxicating and quotable comedies of the last half-century.

The three-sided disc, supervised by Kubrick himself, is presented—as was Voyager's Kubrick-supervised **STRANGELOVE**—in a “split-format” aspect ratio, which is (in this case) 1.66:1 during interior studio scenes and 1.33:1 during most exterior shots. The 1.66 portions are soft-matted. There are 33 chapters—a reasonable number, considering the film's languorous pace—and, thoughtfully, Side 3 opens with a replay of the matted exterior dissolve which ends hard on Side 2. A short trailer, only 1m long, is also included. The gatefold features a handy production overview by Gene Youngblood, which describes **LOLITA** as Kubrick's most underrated film, though **BARRY LYNDON** and **FULL METAL JACKET** surely have fewer fervent admirers.

Having seen **LOLITA** countless times on television and tape, I



Producer James B. Harris waits in the wings with Vivian Darkbloom (Marianne Stone) and Clare Quilty (Peter Sellers), as *LOLITA* (Sue Lyon) performs in her school play.

found this three-sided "Criterion Collection" disc a textural revelation. On the morning after Charlotte (Shelley Winters)'s thwarted leopard-skin seduction of Humbert (James Mason)—ruined by Lolita (Sue Lyon)'s unexpected arrival—her bitchiness is explained as a sexual frustration by dressing the character in a leopard-skin blouse under an apron; her sexuality is being smothered by maternal obligations. It's a touch I'd never noticed before. Similarly, after Charlotte introduces Humbert to her late husband's revolver ("Hey—a gun!") and places it on the bedside table, a call from Lolita leads to an argument and Humbert lies angrily in bed with his back turned

to his wife. Humbert explains his silence by saying that he is "following a train of thought." "Am I on that train?" Charlotte asks. Given the enhanced definition of image here, we can see Humbert's shadowed eyes glowering at the revolver as he answers, "Yes." It is also more obvious that the closing scenes of Humbert stumbling through the clutter of Quilty's mansion were taken from a different take than the opening scene—Humbert kicks aside two sets of bottles upon entering, and actually strums a harp in one of the takes.

The digital mono soundtrack is enticing and full of unexpected presence. Bob Harris' soundtrack has always been an underappre-

ciated component of the film's charm, and it is conveyed here in all its richness. From the gentle cha-cha music of its "Lolita Theme" to the icy harpsichord that heralds Quilty's various intrusions, Harris' playful score keeps the story's pedophile theme at a discrete distance, its satiric edge sabre-sharp, and the heartfelt emotions at its core accessible and deeply moving. Whenever the performances verge on the delicious, as they often do, Harris has a delightful knack of sweetening the already sublime by elevating his musical support to a headier key.

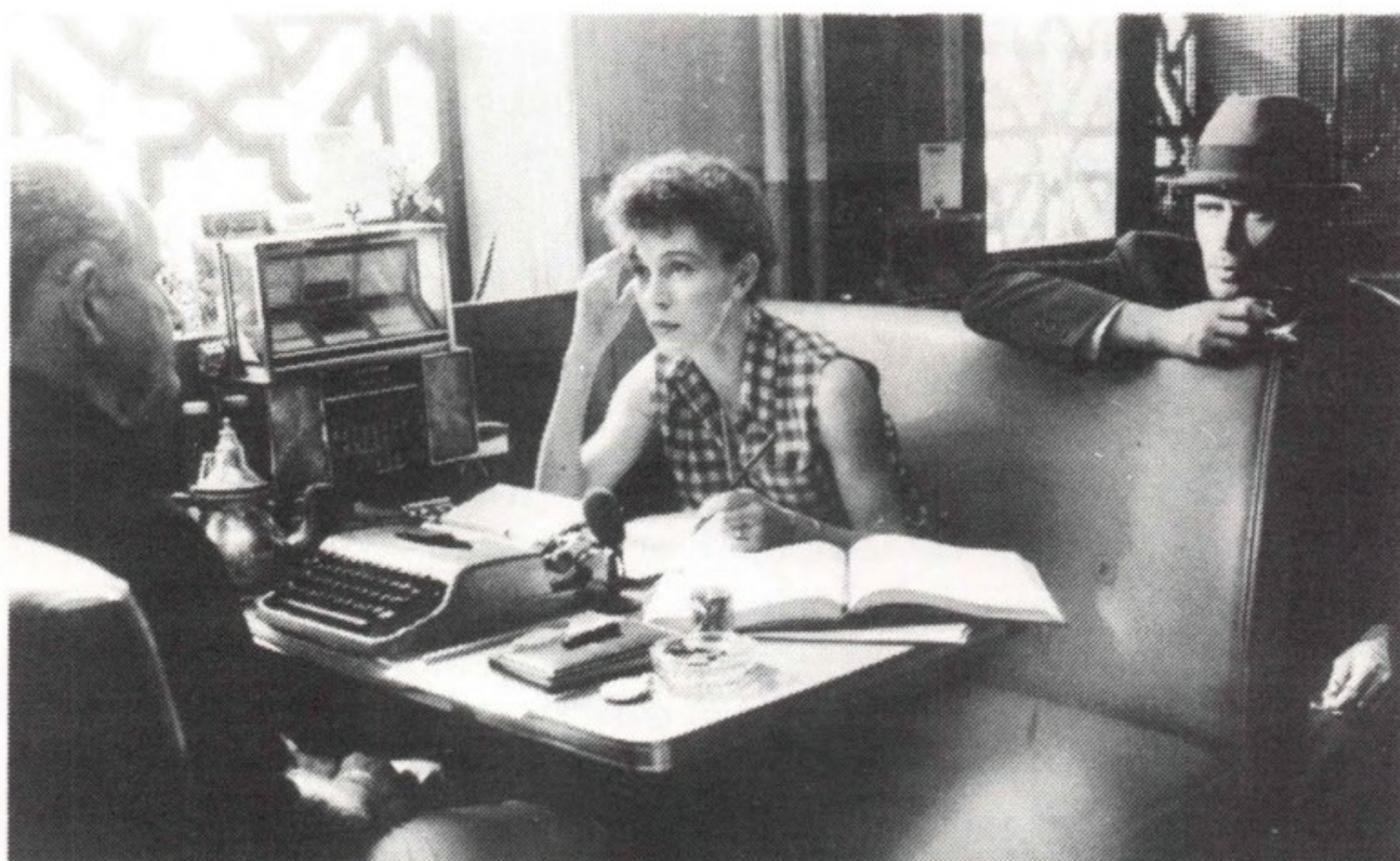
LOLITA is a film worth revisiting in any form, but this edition is surely the best of them all.

NAKED LUNCH

1991, FoxVideo (Image Ent.) 5614-80, D/S/SS, \$94.98, 115m 29s

William S. Burroughs' **NAKED LUNCH**, first published in 1959, is less a novel than a searing, impressionistic scat-song on the subjects of power, corruption, addiction, and paranoia, presented with equal flourishes of burlesque and horror. Despite its title, David Cronenberg's film should not be mistaken for **NAKED LUNCH**, or as a cinematic representation of that work; it takes the inspired approach of cribbing dialogue, characters, and situations from various Burroughs novels (particularly the biographical works **JUNKY**, **QUEER**, and **EXTERMINATOR!**) to camouflage a rather thinly-disguised remake of **VIDEODROME** (1983). The fact that the film doesn't adapt Burroughs' novel as much as adopt its fashionably subversive glamor for its own purposes, recalls one critic's charge that **NAKED LUNCH** has always had more admirers than readers, more trendy adherents than true disciples.

One can point to any number of films that contain more pronounced Burroughsian elements:



*Ian Holm, Judy Davis, and Peter Weller socialize over their typewriters in David Cronenberg's **NAKED LUNCH**.*

Sterling Hayden's soliloquy about "precious bodily fluids" in Stanley Kubrick's **DR. STRANGELOVE** (1964); the "cut-up" editing techniques in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Nicolas Roeg, in which arbitrary non-linear arrangements of footage reveal unsuspected truths of association; and, of course, the Vaudevillian character of "Dr. Benway" alone has spawned an entire generation of coarse and megalomaniacal surgeons, from James Coburn in **CANDY** (1968), to John Carradine in **MYRA BRECKINRIDGE** (1970), to Graham Crowden in **O LUCKY MAN!** (1973) and **BRITANNIA HOSPITAL** (1982). Admittedly, Cronenberg's own work has shown a pronounced Burroughsian influence from the beginning, starting with his homoerotic science "routines" **STEREO** (1969) and **CRIMES OF THE FUTURE** (1970), continuing through the venereal horrors of **THEY CAME FROM WITHIN** (1975) and **RABID** (1977), and culminating in the techno-virus satire **VIDEODROME** (1983) and the bizarre addiction scenario of **DEAD RINGERS** (1988, which lifts

several lines from Burroughs, including "Doctor, I simply cannot continue to work under these conditions"). In a sense, by waiting too long to actually adapt **NAKED LUNCH**, Cronenberg has alternately *adopted* it—and his creative debt to Burroughs—serially, in his own screenplays instead; the proof is in the near-exhausted creativity of this nominal adaptation.

Here the themes of **NAKED LUNCH** have been junked in favor of Cronenberg's ongoing preoccupation with subjective reality, and those individuals whose special talents force them to dwell outside the scope of so-called "normal" society. In Cronenberg's **NAKED LUNCH**, Insect Typewriters replace Flesh TV's and their dialogue literally reprises the "Kill your partners" tumorspeak of **VIDEODROME**; like **VIDEODROME**, **NAKED LUNCH** concludes with its desocialized hero on the threshold of a strange borderland that can be crossed only with gunfire. The only difference is that Cronenberg's alienated heroes are now pointing their guns at other people.

The special effects creations of Chris Walas Inc. are, frankly, among the worst I've seen in a major release in many years; the unfinished look of the centipede sex prop suggests that money was low and running out fast. It's one thing for William Burroughs to describe, in the context of an hallucinatory collage, Venusian mutant spies with penises grafted to their faces drinking spinal fluid, but to see similar tableaux made literal on the screen has an unfortunate way of tweaking literary outrageousness into cinematic clichés.

The film's greatest misrepresentation of the novel is its suggestion that Burroughs wrote **NAKED LUNCH** in a zonked-out, junky daze. The implication—made explicit in a scene where William Lee (Peter Weller)'s cohorts read to him some unfamiliar passages from his own work-in-progress—is that drugs wrote the book or, at the very least, were responsible for Burroughs' unique literary style. On the contrary, Burroughs has always credited the fact of the novel's existence to Dr. John Yerbury Dent's apomorphine cure for heroin addiction, which he took in 1956—four years *prior* to the novel's completion. Cronenberg cleverly soft-pedals Lee's hard opiates with fantasy-tinged words like "black meat" and "bugpowder," but the spoons and ampoules and other artifacts glimpsed inside the hobo novelist's pillowcase—which Lee describes as the fragments of his broken typewriter (in other words, his means to expression)—are a *naked lunch*, a clear-eyed glimpse of an undisguised fix; in this context, Cronenberg appears to be proposing narcotics as a catalyst to creative expression.

On the plus side, **NAKED LUNCH** continues to demonstrate Cronenberg's ever-increasing skill as a director of actors. Judy Davis

(**A PASSAGE TO INDIA**, **BARTON FINK**) gives a mesmerizing, dark-hued performance as William Lee's ill-fated wife Joan; besides bearing a remarkable resemblance to Joan Vollmer (Burroughs' common law wife, who died in 1951 under vaguely similar circumstances as dramatized here), Davis explores areas of her talent that her previous films haven't accessed, and she once again proves herself among the most gifted actresses of her generation. If her dual performance as the expatriate writer Joan Frost (loosely based on Jane Bowles) is less interesting, it is because the romanticized, guilt-edged obsession this character symbolizes could not be less endemic to Burroughs' writings. Julian Sands—who looks infinitely more like the young William Burroughs than Peter Weller—is also excellent as the white-suited sadist Yves Cloquet, as is Ian Holm as the Paul Bowles surrogate, Tom Frost. As Burroughs' protagonist Bill Lee, Peter Weller captures the quiet, unmoored desperation of the written character, but his withdrawn, laconic portrayal is missing the wry spark of the real Burroughs' personal charisma.

This film was made by much the same crew that Cronenberg used for **DEAD RINGERS** and it must be admitted that **NAKED LUNCH** is, at the very least, a work of equal technical confidence and sophistication. Photographed by Peter Suschitzky, the film looks handsome and intriguing, full of somber colors, exotic sets and evocative costuming—it's gorgeous, but it hasn't anything to do with the undead squalor of the novel. Perhaps the film's best and most daring idea was to wed Howard Shore's orchestral score with the harmolodics of the Ornette Coleman Trio; Coleman's flailing alto sax lines give the film an

emotional climate of exoticism, exploration, and adventure, all wedded to an underlying, pervasive loneliness and despair. These emotional stations aren't complemented by Weller's deadpan performance, but the sense of counterpoint is unusual and appealing. The digital stereo presentation is ravishing.

FoxVideo's disc, for reasons we have yet to discern, runs exactly 30s longer than their VHS cassette version. The image is pleasing but more velvety than sharp, and the blacks are mildly chalky and never quite true. The disc has been exhaustively chapter-encoded, and concludes with the original theatrical trailer. The 1m 40s trailer makes extensive use of clips from Antony Balch's short film **THE CUT UPS** and is narrated by a voice artist purporting to be Burroughs.

TANNER '88, VOL. 1

1988, Criterion Television
CTV1001L, D, \$39.98, 117m 1s

TANNER '88, VOL. 2

1988, Criterion Television
CTV1002L, D, \$39.98, 116m 42s

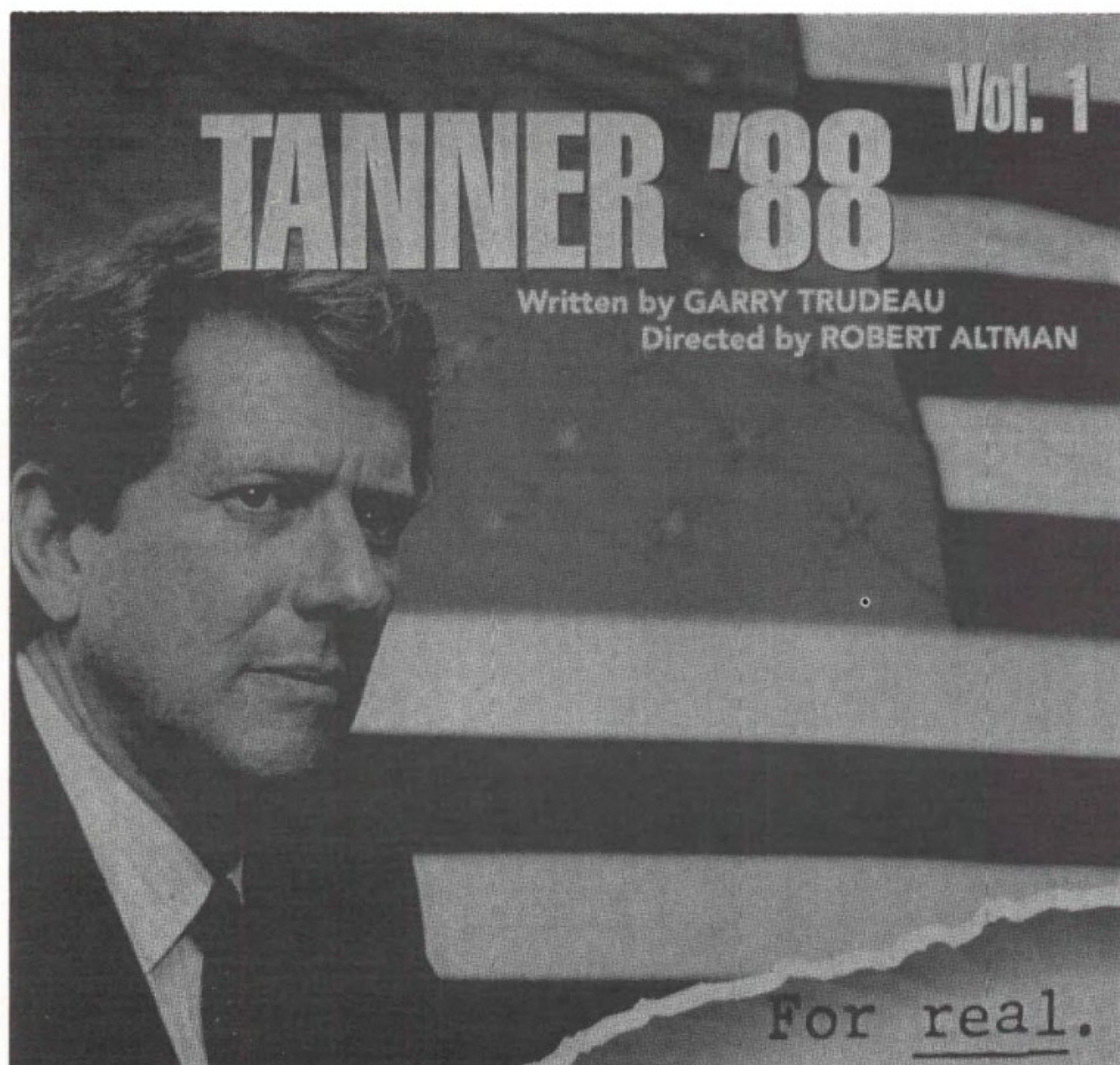
TANNER '88, VOL. 3

1988, Criterion Television
CTV1003L, D, \$39.98, 117m 58s

If you're one of those viewers who reject HBO as the white bread of the cable networks, you probably didn't see their serial broadcast of **TANNER '88** during that year's presidential race. Directed by movie maverick Robert Altman and scripted by Garry (Doonesbury) Trudeau, the 11-episode miniseries chronicled the fictional dark horse candidacy of Michigan Democrat John Quentin "Jack" Tanner (Michael Murphy). Capably filmed on videotape by Altman regular Jean Lepine, **TANNER '88** is a funny, often devastating portrait

of America's media-maddened political system, following one straightforward idealist (and his advisors) through the galvanizing gauntlet that spans from quilting club speeches to the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta. Altman calls this political satire-*verité* "probably the best work I've done"; it's not only one of his most engrossing works, but also a kind of summation of his entire film career. Echoes of **NASHVILLE**, **CALIFORNIA SPLIT**, **SECRET HONOR**, and even **NIGHTMARE IN CHICAGO** resonate in a narrative that may be the closest thing we have to a self-contained, emotional and political time capsule of this nation of cynical dreamers.

VOL. 1 contains three episodes. "The Dark Horse," the hour-long debut episode, attends the test-marketing of Tanner's public image ("The Future is Now") at quilting bees, backyard barbecues, and a focus group screening of an incompetent biography reel; the episode concludes with an exhausted and embarrassed Tanner in conference with his staff, where he launches into an impassioned soliloquy about his unique qualifications for "generational leadership" that makes us realize that this character may have some gunpowder in him, after all. The next two episodes, like the remaining eight, are approximately 30m in length. "For Real" takes Tanner to a Nashville fundraiser, where contributors are entertained by Waylon Jennings and the New Grass Revival until an apparent assassination attempt disrupts the evening. "Night of the Twinkies" documents the attempts of Tanner's stranded press corps to reach Nashville to cover the attempted stabbing, and Tanner's own attempt to renew his friendship with local black leader, Reverend Billy Cryer (Cleavon Little)—a personal



Michael Murphy as Jack Tanner.

moment that badly backfires when his staffers twist it into a public event.

VOL. 2's "Moonwalker and Bookbag" finds Tanner qualified for Secret Service protection, throwing a Washington DC party attended by a number of *real* political trend-setters, and being arrested for participating in a South African protest rally; it also introduces Tanner's secret lover Joanna Buckley (Wendy Crewson) and his estranged Brigadier General father (E.G. Marshall). "Bagels with Bruce" is highlighted by Tanner's heart-to-heart talk with real-life Governor Bruce Babbitt, who has just dropped out of the Presidential race; "Child's Play" includes a Hollywood fund-raiser hosted by Rebecca DeMornay and Tanner's "make-over" by image consultant Dorothy Sarnoff; and "The Great Escape" features a number of surprises—including Tanner's insulting of Jesse Jackson during a televised debate (the only point

where the show's careful *verité* staging stumbles), a pep talk over beer-and-cigarettes from Linda Ellerbee, and the revelation that Tanner is sleeping with the campaign manager of his leading opponent, Michael Dukakis!

While all of the previous episodes contain flashes of brilliance, VOL. 3's episodes—"The Girlfriend Factor," "Something Borrowed, Something New," "The Boiler Room" and "The Reality Check"—take the satire to the very edge of realism and darken it to a shade of greatness. This volume contains Tanner's harrowing visit to a staff member's former neighborhood in Detroit, now overrun with crack houses and random shootings; his hastily staged, helicopter-haunted wedding and the naming of his surreal, celebrity-stocked Cabinet; and the fierce strategizing and super-tracking behind the Atlanta Democratic Convention itself.

The cast is extraordinary, with an especially memorable range of

female performances. Pamela Reed steals the show as T.J. Cavanaugh, Tanner's chain-smoking, workaholic campaign manager; Veronica Cartwright gives her usual strong and incisive performance as NBC reporter Molly Hark, whose place in the Tanner press corps represents the coming end of her career in television reporting; Cynthia Nixon as Tanner's politically ambitious daughter Alex, who ties him to her left-wing affiliations without consulting him; and, perhaps the hidden gem of this broadcast, Ilana Levine as Andrea Spinelli, who evolves (devolves?) over the course of 11 episodes from a preposterous *naïf* (à la Gwen Welles or Shelley Duvall) to "not a nice person." At the heart of this maelstrom is Michael Murphy's performance as Tanner, so natural that it invites underrating, but he's never had a better role and he's never been better. The participation of such '88 political luminaries as Gary Hart, Kitty Dukakis, Bruce Babbitt and Robert Dole, and tele-journalists like Linda Ellerbee, Lynn Russell, and The Nashville Network's Crook and Chase lend fabric to the fabrication, and whet the viewer's appetite for an explanation of how all these sprawling realities were orchestrated by Altman and Trudeau into the service of fantasy. The only thing sorely missing is a glimpse of Rob Lowe at the Atlanta Convention.

TANNER '88 has been collected on this separate, three-disc presentation with generally high quality; only the color timing of Episode 2A is erratic, with a green and purple bias, and the stereo sound suffers one or two fleeting drop-outs along the way. The set is ideally chapter-encoded; the hour-long premiere episode is given 20 chapters, while the remaining half-hour programs are granted 10-14 each. Michael Wilmington provides excellent liner notes for

each volume, and each disc comes packaged with an insightful essay sheet written by Wilmington, Michael Nash, and Gary Kornblau, respectively—the latter two articles revised from their original appearance in ART ISSUES #19 (Sept/Oct '91). The individual packaging scheme seems unnecessary, but if it enables anyone to indulge their curiosity in the series without having to first invest in a three-figure, three-disc box set—all well and good.

If at all possible, we recommend watching TANNER '88 in one colossal, six-hour gulp, which allows the production to accrue a remarkable degree of verisimilitude. The characters become astonishingly real, and you'll think of them for days afterwards, wondering whatever became of them. Alas, HBO rejected Altman and Trudeau's proposal for a TANNER '92.

WEREWOLF OF LONDON

1935, MCA Universal 40825,
D, \$34.95, 74m 57s

This, the first significant film on the subject of lycanthropy, seems today to take an even more peculiar approach than Terence Fisher's unorthodox **CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF**. It begins in the mountains of Tibet, where botanist Dr. Wilfrid Glendon (Henry Hull) is on expedition for the legendary, moon-blooming flower, *Marifasa lupino lumino*, unaware of its properties as an antidote for "lycanthophobia." Shortly after discovering a sample, Glendon is attacked by a fellow seeker—to use the film's description, "a Satanic creature with the worst qualities of both [man and wolf]." Glendon is bitten by the creature, but successfully repels him and returns to London with the *Marifasa*. While trying to force its blooming with artificial moonlight,

Glendon encounters a fellow botanist, Dr. Yogami (Warner Oland), who is in fact the Tibetan werewolf, also in search of a *Marifasa* fix (the stem is literally shoved into the thirsting vein like a junkie's spike). With Yogami annoying him professionally, and his wife Lisa (Valerie Hobson) annoying him personally with an extramarital romance, Glendon succumbs to his affliction and murders several strangers before narrowing his predatory focus to the thing he loves best.

Filmed only two years after the publication of Guy Endore's novel *THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS* (the basis of Fisher's film), this production was only titularly influenced by its success; John Colton's screenplay—adapted by Harvey Gates and Robert Harris from Harris' original story—seems a cobbling-together of the Yeti legends and Rouben Mamoulian's **DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE** (1932). The basis of Glendon's inner wolf (so to speak) is erotic jealousy, much as Mamoulian had used pent-up erotic energies as the basis of Jekyll's inner Hyde. (John P. Fulton's transformation scenes, it should be mentioned, employ the same red-green lighting schemes made famous by Karl Struss in the Mamoulian film.) The most fascinating difference between Hull's werewolf and all subsequent portrayals is that Glendon never loses *himself* during the transformation; he retains his human wits, is able to don an ulster and billcap to disguise himself for killing streetwalkers in Goose Lane; he becomes literally (to use a fashionable term used more than once in this scenario) "beastly." With his dangling pince-nez and smoking jacket, Hull's werewolf vaguely recalls the surviving photographs of Creighton Hale's eerily urbane Devil in Benjamin Christensen's lost **SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN**

(1929); it's a haunting performance, given a wonderful boost by Jack Pierce's Mephistophelian makeup design. Ironically, the same metaphors used to describe Glendon's repression are employed to illustrate Lisa's former happiness; her former suitor Paul Ames (Lester Matthews) recalls with sadness how this tamed married woman, with all the "fight" gone out of her, used to "roar" and "screech" with such gusto as a single girl.

WEREWOLF OF LONDON holds up fairly well as a horror relic, but its oft-criticized casting and direction (by Stuart Walker) are less to blame for its incommensurate quality than its fashionably frivolous dialogue ("I'd just jitter to go to Java!") and the injudicious editing of Russell Schoengarth and Milton Carruth, perhaps the most disastrous cutting imposed on any Universal horror classic. Several conversations seem to begin in progress, commenced with splices crude enough to trip over, and other scenes appear to have been edited to *decrease* their original effectiveness.

Two cases in point: in Chapter 16, Yogami visits Scotland Yard to inform them of the important role played by Glendon's *Marifasa* in the Goose Lane murders. The scene ends with a discussion of the wolf that Glendon has freed from the zoo to confuse the authorities, as Oland turns his gaze to the camera and delivers the chilling line, "Whether you catch it or not will not matter much—*tonight!*" [Frames 9660-9880]. The editors ruin the impact of Oland's delivery by cutting away to a superfluous reaction shot of Lester Matthews. A similar tactic is used during Glendon's climactic laboratory fight with Yogami. At the height of battle, the scene cuts away to socialite Ettie Coombes (Spring



This final closeup of Dr. Yogami (Warner Oland) doesn't appear in the final cut of WEREWOLF OF LONDON.

Byington) fretting over Lisa: "Relax, dear! Relax!" When we cut back to the fight, Glendon has already transformed into a werewolf, and Yogami has deep, unexplained scratches down the left side of his face. Happily, the film's trailer (Chapter 23) contains the missing footage of the werewolf inflicting these scratches [Frames 33814-33875], and the shot is also contained in Chapter 24's supplementary "Photo Scrapbook." Also included with the stills is a beautifully composed shot of Yogami's death, his bloodied head in a pool of moonlight beside the *Marifasa*, an image which does not appear in the feature itself. Even Yogami's death is not shown in the film, their battle ending with a closeup from Yogami's POV as

he is strangled by the werewolf. The shot concludes abruptly with an unexplained screech (20/25647), which the original screenplay explains as the cry of the *Marifasa* itself as it is crushed under the weight of Yogami!

The materials used to create MCA Universal's disc are in very good condition, considering their age; there are fewer scratches and speckles than on MCA's **THE INVISIBLE RAY** (1936)—a film of comparable vintage—though the print was evidently assembled from more than one source. The digital soundtrack is adequate. A Realart re-release trailer is also provided, and MCA has taken the unusual and appreciated measure of windowboxing the hyperbolic frames, making them entirely readable.

The postscript supplement—which includes 4 lobby cards and 109 frames of B&W photos "from the Movie Archives of Jan Alan Henderson"—necessitated that CAV be reserved for the disc's second side, but the frames one yearns to study in this film all appear on Side 1; Side 2's climactic transformation is nothing more than a succession of match-dissolved matte paintings.

A welcome laserdisc release, **WEREWOLF OF LONDON** is now more curiosity than classic, but this sterling presentation serves to awaken questions about its production history that have been far too long ignored. Also available on MCA Universal cassettes—*sans* supplements—for \$14.95.



BIBLIO WATCHDOG

NIGHTMARE OF ECSTASY

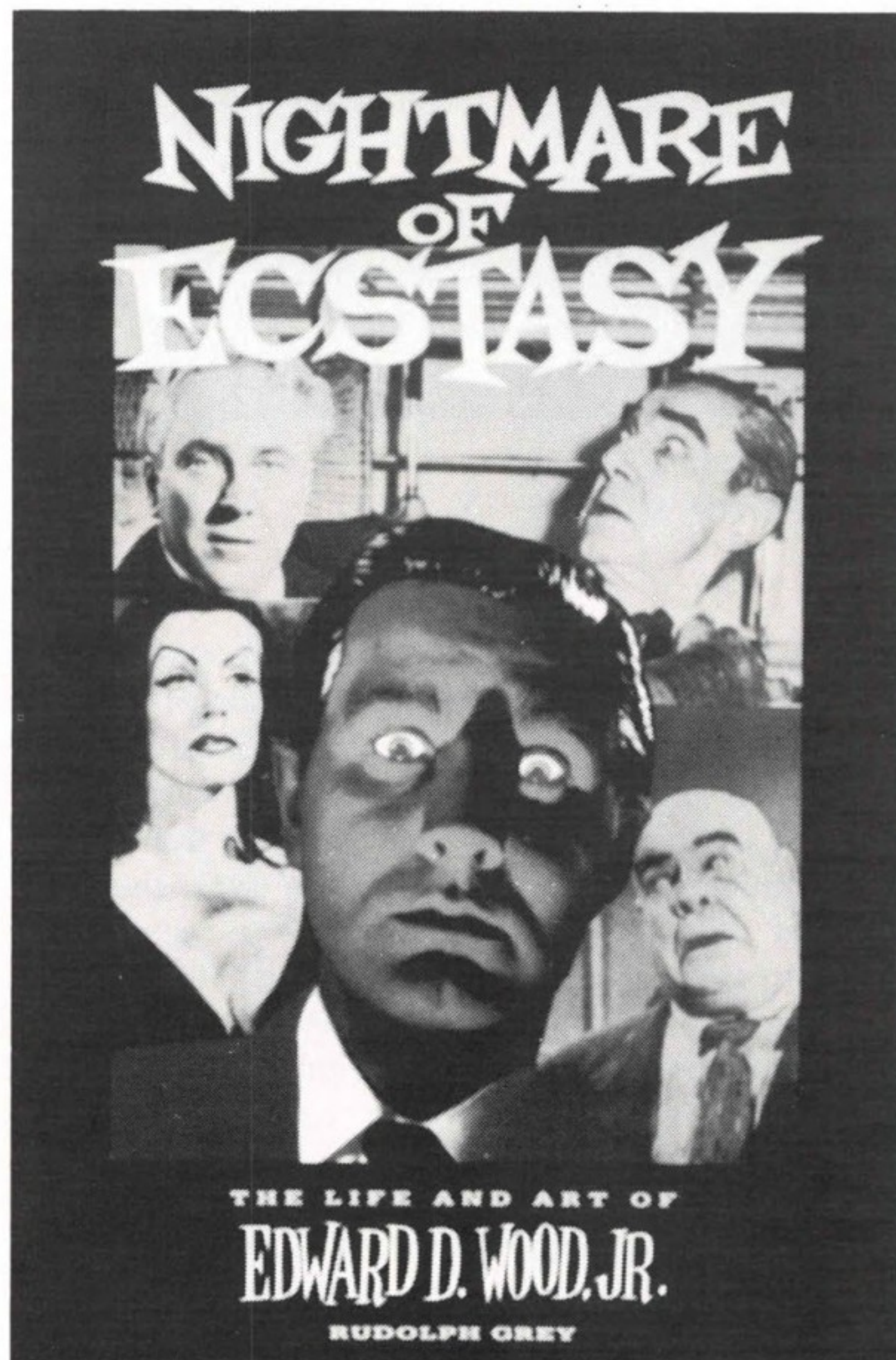
THE LIFE AND ART OF EDWARD D. WOOD, JR.

RUDOLPH GREY

Feral House Press, \$14.95

P.O. Box 861893, Los Angeles, CA 90086-1893

Reviewed By Tim Lucas



RUDOLPH GREY'S long-awaited biography of Edward D. Wood, Jr. (1924-78)—the tragic transvestite *auteur* of **GLEN OR GLENDA?** (1953), **PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE** (1956, released 1959), and many other cinematic bewilderments—is both much more and far less than its patient audience may have expected. Ten years in the making, Grey's book opts to let its research speak for itself, compiling the testimonies of friends, relatives, and former "Wood Spooks"—including Maila Nurmi ("Vampira"), Valda Hansen ("The White Ghost" from **NIGHT OF THE GHOULS**, 1958), and Wood himself—into a compelling oral history. This *audio verité* approach, with its conflicting memories and vanities, is as compulsively readable as tabloid gossip and as fascinating as a roadside accident; unfortunately, it also invites the reader to assume the biographer's role as Father Confessor to the extent that Grey's failure to synthesize his information into something more significant or useful becomes disappointingly evident.

After a short introduction, in which Grey places the Wood canon into his own—as opposed to *its* own—historical perspective, there is no attempt to explain Wood's artistic right to such a monument. Wood's intimates paint a verbal portrait of an incorrigible dreamer, hooked at an early age on Hollywood and angora sweaters, who fought for his country in WWII and was later fought by his country, as he led his own alternative lifestyle and made his own oddball movies, until both were extinguished in their respective gutters. These reminiscences—covering 160 pages, each paragraph attributed to its speaker—are followed by the *Dramatis Personae* that should have preceded them, prefaced with the surprising news that some of the witnesses (indicated by their omission from this list) have been given pseudonyms to



*Did Ed Wood contribute footage to this climactic moment from
FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF aka LA CASA DEL TERROR?*

protect their anonymity! Pseudonyms, like the specific relationships of informants, should be tipped-off from the start; as it is, Grey doesn't tell us that Evelyn Wood (who last speaks on p. 48) was no relation to Ed until p. 169. And if the biographer is too casual to assume such a responsibility, that's what editors are for.

In its excitement to catalogue every last indignity which befell Ed Wood, NIGHTMARE OF ECSTASY is a veritable caravan of missed opportunities to set the record straight and to uncover some startling new information about his ill-lustrous career. Actor Timothy Farrell is first mentioned in the chapter devoted to **JAILBAIT** (1954), neglecting the important fact that he had narrated **GLEN OR GLEND?** the previous year. No mention is made of Wood's campy educational short **DATING DO'S & DON'TS** (c. 1955), which attended the first date jitters of "Woody," the younger brother of easy-going "Eddie." Most startling of all the book's revelations is film editor Ewing "Lucky" Brown's recollection of Wood filming a promotional reel for one of his unsold screenplays in 1957 at Santa Monica's Kenmore Stages (p. 123).

According to Brown, the footage involved Lon Chaney Jr.—in werewolf makeup—scaling the outer edge of a highrise building. Though Grey doesn't make the connection, there is cause to suspect that this footage somehow went on to form (at least part of) the climax of Gilberto Martinez Solares' Mexican film **La Casa del Terror** ("The House of Terror," 1959), which was subsequently cannibalized for Jerry Warren's **THE FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF** (1965)! This is the most important new detail about Wood's career to surface in the entire book but, alas, the trail isn't pursued.

The in-depth appendices—devoted to Wood's filmography (including 16mm homemade shorts), bibliography (more than 40 porn softcovers described in loving detail, with other elusive titles listed), and unrealized projects—provide Grey's most important contribution to Wood lore.

As it is, one closes NIGHTMARE OF ECSTASY thinking that Rudolph Grey has unearthed some terrific information and looking forward to the day when someone turns it into a book.

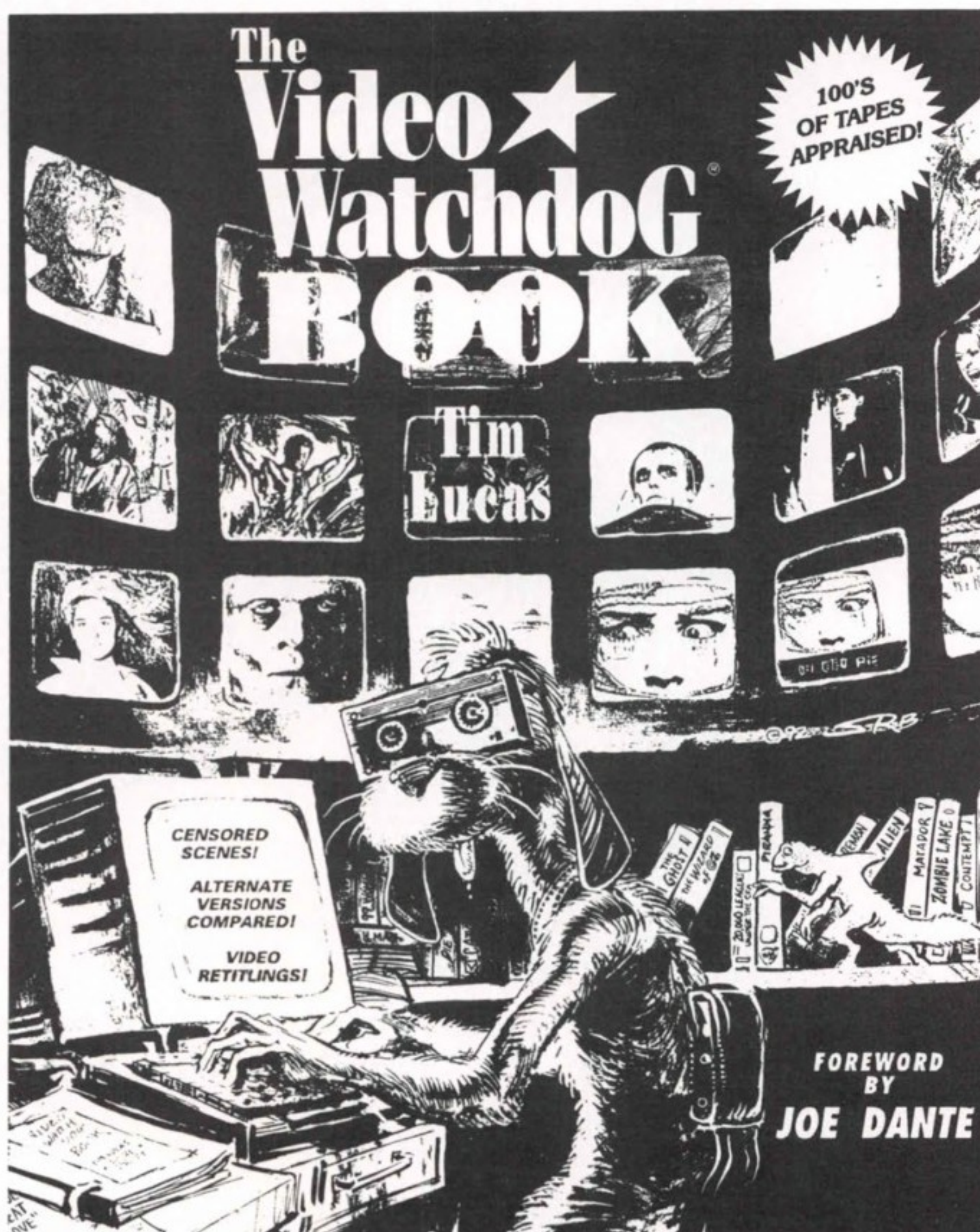


THE REVIEWS ARE IN!

*"THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK
is the essential
Video Collector's Bible!"*
—ERIC CAIDIN
Hollywood Book & Poster News

*"Lucas writes very well
and has an incredible eye.
His discoveries make this
book invaluable!"*
—SCOTT EYMAN
The Palm Beach Post

*"An Excellent tome...
Superb layout and design...
I can't recommend this book
highly enough!"*
—JEFF SMITH, *Wet Paint*



It's the Perfect VW Companion!

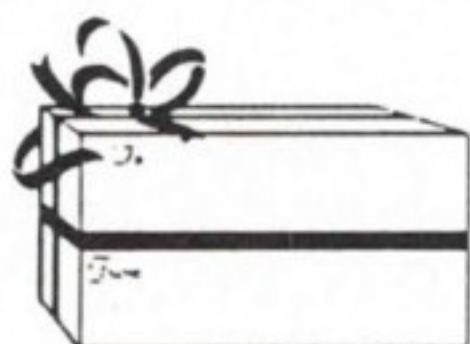
- Over 400 Pages of Horror and Exploitation Video Trivia!
- More than 650 Video Retitlings Exposed!
- Hundreds of Rare and Exciting Photos!

- Select Additional Entries about Mainstream Releases!
- A complete Index to the First 12 Issues of VIDEO WATCHDOG Magazine!

Full Color Cover by Stephen R. Bissette!
Illustrations by Brian Thomas!
Foreword by Joe Dante!

**Signed and numbered
Limited Edition copies
available!**

Available in Bookstores and from VIDEO WATCHDOG!



Makes a great gift!

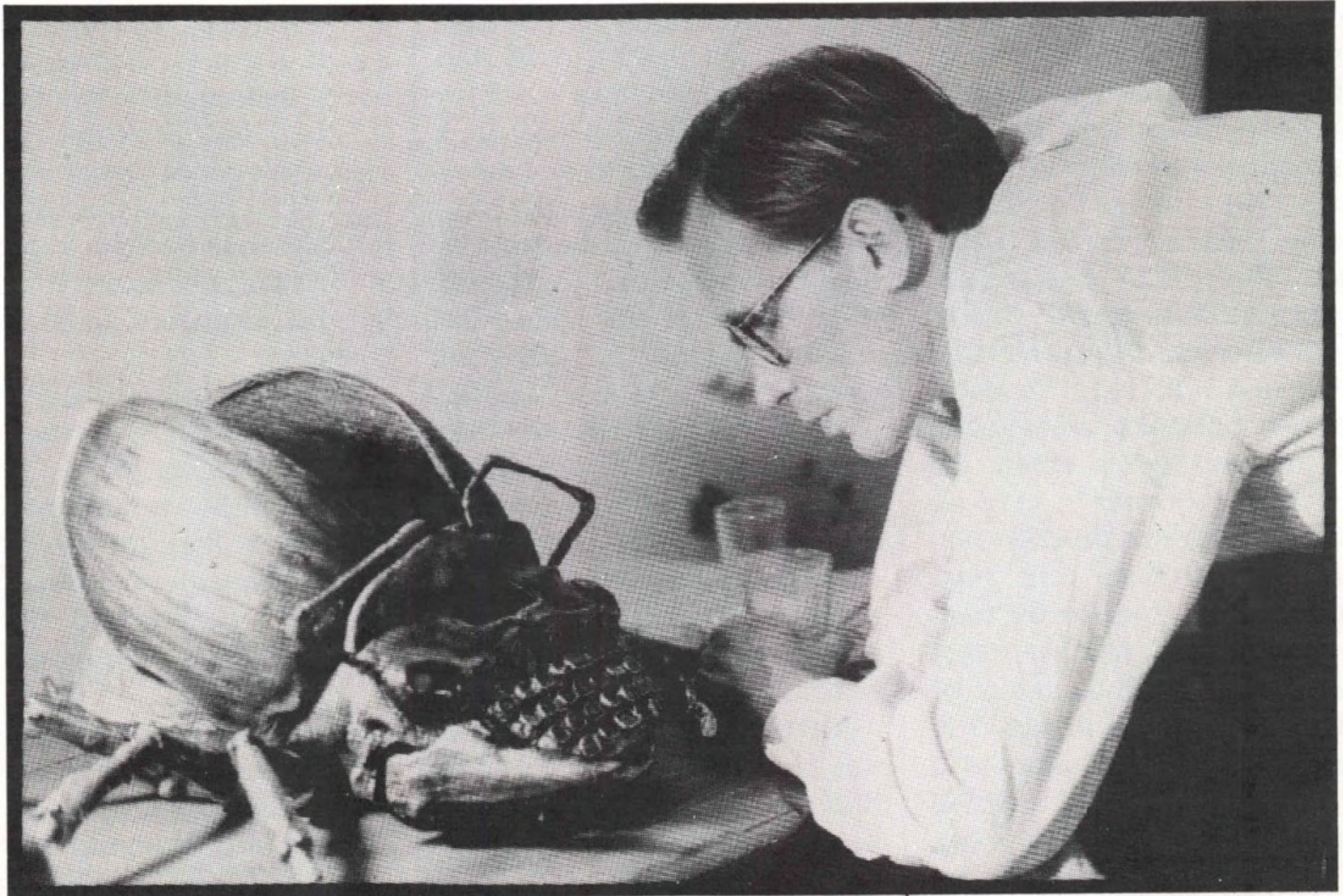
Order by VISA/MasterCard or send
Cash, Check or Money Order in US funds to:

\$19.95—USA
\$24.95—Outside USA

Book Rate/Surface Postage included.
For Air Mail, add \$3 (USA), \$5 (Outside USA)

VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOKS
P.O. Box 5283
Cincinnati, OH 45205-0283
Or call: (513) 471-8989

THE LETTERBOX



Before we get into this issue's "Letterbox," I'd like to make a few preliminary comments. As anyone who scrutinizes my Kennel activities from issue to issue should know, this has been an incredibly busy year for Yours Truly—writing CD liner notes, introductions to books, magazine articles, finishing a novel and, last but not least, preparing and publishing THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK. I'm not complaining, but my correspondents probably are! Please know that I haven't forgotten you, and that I hope to answer all the letters that still require an answer—before the Smithsonian decides to submit a bid on the Tower of Babble in my in-bin.

Also, we haven't mentioned it for awhile, but don't forget that all published VW informants and

correspondents receive a free, limited edition VW button. We've finally run out of our B&W "VIDEO WATCHDOG Informant" buttons (instant collector's item!) and so, with this issue, we are proud to introduce our brand-new, full-color "I'm a VIDEO WATCHDOG" button! Although my personal replies take forever, our button service is remarkably prompt.

One more thing: If you don't have THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK, your VW collection isn't complete. Tell your favorite bookstore that they can now order THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK through Baker & Taylor and The Distributors. Of course, signed and numbered copies are still available directly from us, for only \$19.95—and we pay the postage! So what are you waiting for?

—T.L.

BOOKS, BOOTS, & BOMBS

Received THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK and thought I'd send you a few observations. First of all, I had no idea that VW had existed in so many forms before GOREZONE (when I first caught up with it), and it was a delight to see this material. The addendum at the end of each chapter kept the material fresh, and the revisions to the GOREZONE columns made each one a revelation in re-reading. The book's layout is first-rate, and I certainly wish you the greatest success with it. Some specific thoughts:

*Bill Lee (Peter Weller)
and insect typewriter in
David Cronenberg's
NAKED LUNCH.*

Chapter 14: On the subject of British bootlegs, this was something I had not experienced until recently. Upon entering a local video store, I was shocked to see a number of important Hammer films available for rent and sale. The boxes looked legit, featuring enticing color artwork in hardshell cases. The titles (all on "Warner Home Video") included **DRACULA —PRINCE OF DARKNESS**, **THE DEVIL RIDES OUT**, **TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA**, **DRACULA A.D. 1972**, **PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES**, and **CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB**. On the "Castle Pictures" label were **FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN**, **RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK**, and Michael Reeves' non-Hammer classic **WITCHFINDER GENERAL**. The British titles for **WITCHFINDER** and **RIDES OUT** were, of course, a giveaway as to their origin. When I queried whether the cassettes were in PAL or NTSC, I was assured they were the latter. Intrigued, I rented several of them. The quality was disappointing, for the same reason you stated: grainy and contrasty, due to the PAL-NTSC conversion. They were also recorded too "hot" on the Hi-Fi tracks, leading to a good deal of distortion; the linear tracks were fine, however.

Chapter 15: **CATACLYSM**—unbelievable story behind that

film. Back in 1982, I was an assistant editor on **GRETTA** (aka **DEATH WISH CLUB**) and **HARRY**, both of which ended up in the trilogy debacle, **NIGHT TRAIN TO TERROR**. At that time, **CATACLYSM** had been sitting around for a year or so, but Philip Yordan wasn't happy with it and wanted to add some snazzy effects. He asked my opinion, so I took a look at the film in its (then) current form. I mentioned the rather incoherent nature of the storyline, and was told that the film was originally a "disaster" movie, along the lines of **EARTHQUAKE**, **TIDAL WAVE**, *et al!* Yordan noticed that those films were quickly peaking, saw that **THE OMEN** was making big bucks, and wrote a series of pickup scenes to turn it into a devil movie! Considering what originally happened to it (**NIGHT TRAIN**), the version I saw was probably the most coherent that ever existed! By the way, I believe Faith Clift was (or is) Yordan's wife.

Wayne Schmidt
Panorama City, CA

MY AIM IS UNTRUE

While I can't vouch for the laser-disc version of **MANHUNTER**, I do know the rental tape version includes a short scene (36s, no dialogue) to cover the omission of the scene where Graham visits the Shermans at the end of the film.

Following the shootout at Dollarhyde's and Graham's identification of himself to Reba, we cut directly to Dollarhyde's decrepit dock, the next morning. Graham stands gazing out over the water, seen from behind in silhouette. Crawford approaches him from behind, crosses frame and sits down wearily; apparently, both men have been on the site all night (their positioning recapitulates their back-to-back, side-by-side blocking seen at the beginning of the film, when Crawford

tries to talk Graham into accepting the case). The opening of the song "Heartbeat" is heard: "I can hear your heartbeat / Knocking on the window." In both versions, we cut sharp to Graham on the beach, under the lyric "knocking."

Also, Mr. Sherman never "aims" his gun at Graham, as you suggest. In fact, he makes an effort to prevent Graham from seeing the gun, as he shoves it into his backpocket upon recognizing who Graham is.

Now let's talk about the two scenes ABC reincorporated into their broadcast of Michael Crichton's **LOOKER**—including a scene, omitted from the theatrical version, that *explained* the whole weird plot!

David J. Schow
Los Angeles, CA

*Descriptions sometimes suffer when a work is whittled down to presentable size, which explains Mr. Sherman's inappropriate "aim" and, I suppose, the TV version of **LOOKER** as well!*

A CHANGE OF ART

I wanted to comment on VIDEO WATCHDOG #13: great! Going full-color for that incredible still of the Red Dragon tattoo was well worth any extra expense. I remember seeing this (or a similar) still in a pre-release article about **MANHUNTER** in **FANGORIA** and then being bitterly disappointed at how Michael Mann ultimately downplayed the entire William Blake element. I think the removal of the tattoo sequences symbolizes all that keeps the film from truly achieving greatness.

I was fortunate enough to get the Japanese laserdisc of William Friedkin's **RAMPAGE** the very week it was released, and have been scaring people with it ever since. It's probably Friedkin's most mature film thematically, though technically, I think **TO LIVE**



AND DIE IN L.A. is more "entertaining." The new version was evidently screened some months ago at the LA Film Fest, an unspooling I stupidly skipped since it was 4m shorter than my disc. I assumed it was just a cut-down version, a notion that the local reviews did nothing to dispel. Thus I found Mark Kermode's article fascinating; but I do wonder about the true impetus for Friedkin's revisionist actions. Did he have a genuine change of heart about the death penalty and the nature of insanity, or was it part of the Miramax deal that he make the film more "commercial" (and thus, apparently, more simple-minded)? After the insultingly stupid wretchedness of **THE GUARDIAN**, I can well sympathize with both the director and distributor for wanting to ensure the best possible reception for **RAMPAGE**.

And finally, it has always amused me (NOT!) that while Friedkin talks about being a laser fan and the format's importance in film preservation, he refuses to allow **THE EXORCIST** and **SORCERER** to be released letterboxed. Doesn't he see the contradiction? You're not preserving a film if only part of it is visible. Let's hope that, as with the death penalty, he'll have another change of heart sometime in the near future and let the public decide how best to enjoy his work.

Jeff Connor
Los Angeles, CA

FRIEDKIN OF CHOICE

Having just returned from viewing the Miramax release of **RAMPAGE**, and rereading Mark Kermode's coverage of it [VW 13:36-43], I'm confused.

The version I saw was the same as what the article referred to as **RAMPAGE '92**, with the exception of one or two scenes:

- Page 40; Fraser's admission of taking his daughter's life and wanting the same for Reece. This scene *is* in the version I saw, and I'm glad—it was a good idea for the exposition of Fraser's character.

- Page 41; the Dream of the Courtroom Kiss. I don't remember seeing this scene in the version I saw.

- Page 42; Gene Tippets' exchange about God making a judgment upon his family was *not* cut.

- Page 43; Fraser telling the jury that if they let Reece go free, they are saying that his life is worth more than those of his victims. This scene was present in the Miramax version, after all.

I'm wondering why the version I saw was different than what was described as **RAMPAGE '92** in your article. Has Friedkin been reading VW, noticed that Mr. Kermode was right about leaving some scenes in the film and cutting others... and changed the film again? Or—is there a third version of **RAMPAGE** floating around?

Ray Stockfish
Harrison Twp., MI

*Thanks for bringing us up to date, Ray! Mark Kermode wrote his article by comparing the 1987 British cassette release with a Miramax preview cassette, distributed to members of the press back when **RAMPAGE** was scheduled for a Summer '92 release. Without explanation, Miramax bumped it back to August, then to September, and finally to a Halloween release; based on your comments, it seems likely that these postponements were caused by the very last-minute editorial decisions you've spotted. A copy of VIDEO WATCHDOG #13 was indeed sent to William Friedkin but, if our coverage had anything to do with prompting these changes, he hasn't told us about it!*

NOW I DREAM OF TANGO

Your otherwise exemplary write-up of **ANDREI RUBLEV** [VW 13:10-11] erroneously asserts that Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalevsky was the sole screenwriter of the picture. If you've had the opportunity to pick-up the terrific Tarkovsky-penned *kino-roman* of **RUBLEV** (recently published in the US and Britain by Faber and Faber), you are no doubt further acquainted with the film's evolution, which was more complicated than the "scripted by X" and "directed by Y" credits imply. As for the film itself, it is indisputably Tarkovsky's; reading of his life and working methods, it seems that he made himself the sole *auteur* of his films by sheer stubbornness and force of will, much in the way the boy at the end of **RUBLEV** successfully creates the bell.

Konchalevsky himself provides an interesting corroboration of my impression in the essay "I Have Dreams of Andrei," which appears in **ABOUT ANDREI TARKOVSKY**, a cheaply-made, haphazardly edited but nonetheless invaluable English-language book published by Progress, a Moscow-based house. In it, Konchalevsky reveals that he doesn't much care for **RUBLEV**, or almost any other Tarkovsky picture... Poor Konchalevsky. Watching **RUNAWAY TRAIN**, it's difficult, albeit possible, to draw the line to the guy who co-created **VIOLIN AND STEAMROLLER**. But, watching **TANGO AND CASH**, it's impossible to draw the line to the guy who directed **RUNAWAY TRAIN**.

Glenn Kenny
Brooklyn, NY

*The book **ABOUT ANDREI TARKOVSKY** can be ordered at enlightened Barnes and Noble stores, or by calling Imported Publications (320 W. Ohio St., Chicago IL 60610) at 1-800-345-2665.*

YOU CAN CANTON US

The American video release of the Hong Kong prison epic, **ISLAND ON FIRE** [VW 9:20], is over 36m shorter than the theatrical and Taiwanese releases. Pan Asia Video's Cantonese version is missing the crucial opening scene concerning the firing squad execution of a felon who later shows up as a political assassin. Instead, we open with Leung Kar Fei's return to Hong Kong. Many of the fight scenes and expository lines of dialogue have been shortened.

Curiously, several scenes have also been added, including two comic exchanges between Jackie Chan and his model girlfriend. In one, he asks her to remove her high heels so he won't appear to be so short standing next to her. The other contains idle banter between the two of them with Jackie making funny faces at her.

The last scene at the Filipino Airport has also been cut, drastically reducing its impact. Gone also are time references that place the action in the near future, as well as the screen crediting of each big actor as he appears onscreen for the first time.

Ordinarily, one can expect Pan Asia releases to be more faithful to the theatrical version than the Taiwanese copies sold by mail-order companies. Also, the Cantonese versions usually feature the actors' true voices. In **ISLAND ON FIRE**, I could not recognize Sammo Hung's and Jackie Chan's voices as their own.

Lisa Feerick
Los Angeles, CA

A HYDE TO SEEK

I am hoping that VW's readers can help me to solve a riddle. I have two different versions of Stephen Weeks' **I, MONSTER** (1971), starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. One is the UK version,

and the other is the Italian release, which is entitled **La vera storia del Dr. Jekyll** ("The True Story of Dr. Jekyll"), although the title on the video box is **Il mostro di Soho** ("The Monster of Soho")! The UK version runs 76m 56s, and the Italian version is 79m 40s—both in PAL, of course.

If we take the UK version as a point of reference, these are the main differences of the Italian version:

- The woman seen in the studio at the beginning of the UK version is the main character in a subplot in the Italian version. She is Dr. Marlowe (Lee)'s lover. To sustain this subplot, many scenes were added. The strangest relates to her occupation as a ballerina. At the end of the film, during her last appearance, she performs a unique dance involving nudity. These scenes feature a different actress, just as later scenes feature a Chris Lee double who accidentally sets a fire in her dressing room, causing her death!

- Two scenes—one of a bald man being subjected to an injection by Dr. Marlowe, and the scenes featuring Peter Cushing in bed are missing from the Italian version.

- To cut a long story short, the Italian version presents the remaining scenes in a different order than in the UK version, in order to sustain a different plot! The Italian version's greatest inconsistency is that it shows Mr. Blake (the Hyde character) killing a drunken woman with his cane until it snaps... and then later striking Peter Cushing with the same cane, unbroken!

- For some reason, lots of scenes—Dr. Marlowe's injections, the monkey in the cage, the cat in the lab, the backstreet duel, the chase through the park—are all presented in the Italian version in slow-motion!

Have you access to other versions of the film, perhaps the US or French versions? Does anyone

know the story behind the making of this film?

Maurizio Bertino
Biella, Italy

*An Amicus production, **I, MONSTER** was initiated as a 3-D project; when the process proved too costly and time-consuming, it was abandoned halfway through the filming. It was distributed in America by Cannon, and featured none of the scenes you've described from the Italian version; it has never been released here on video. My best guess is that the UK version is identical to the US release, and that **La vera storia del Dr. Jekyll** is a sexed-up version created by the film's Italian distributor to meet the perceived demands of the marketplace.*

WHEREFORE ART THOU, ROMERO?

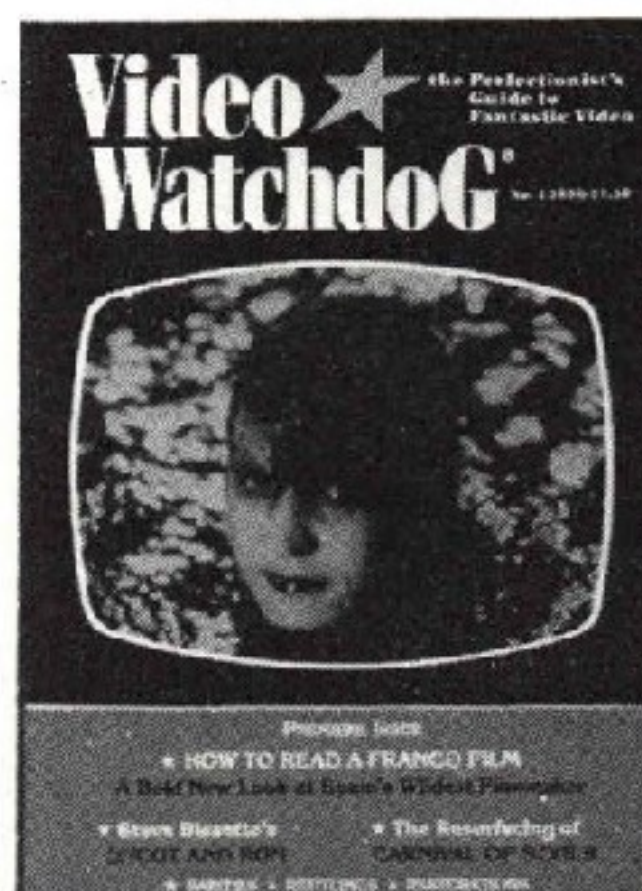
I thought you might like to know that the Image Entertainment laserdisc of George Romero's **MARTIN** contains the censored frames cut from the Media Home Entertainment cassette to get an R rating. The wrist-slitting on the train is longer. The cut is described on Page 79 of Paul R. Gagne's book **THE ZOMBIES THAT ATE PITTSBURGH**. The Media tapes of **MARTIN** and **DAWN OF THE DEAD** were just remaindered. People should grab the LD's while they're still available.

Joe Rodger
Madison, WI

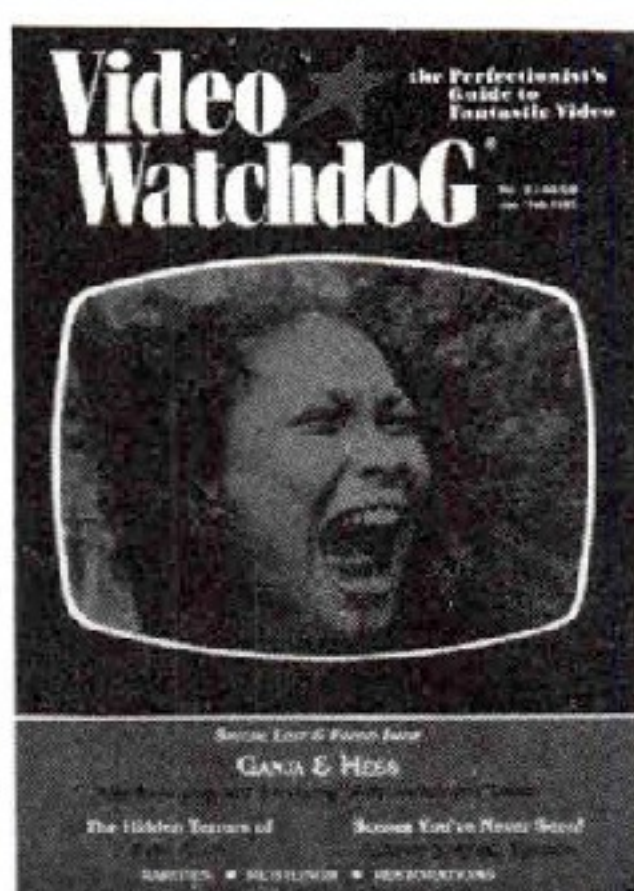
*The Image discs of these Romero films are already hard-to-find and officially out-of-print. Romero fans might also be interested to learn that the Japanese tape and disc release of **DAY OF THE DEAD** was different than the American version in one significant respect—it was in "Zombie-ponic" stereo!*



"The most sumptuous of all publications devoted to the fantastic cinema!"
—PIERRE CHARLES, CINÉ-ZINE ZONE



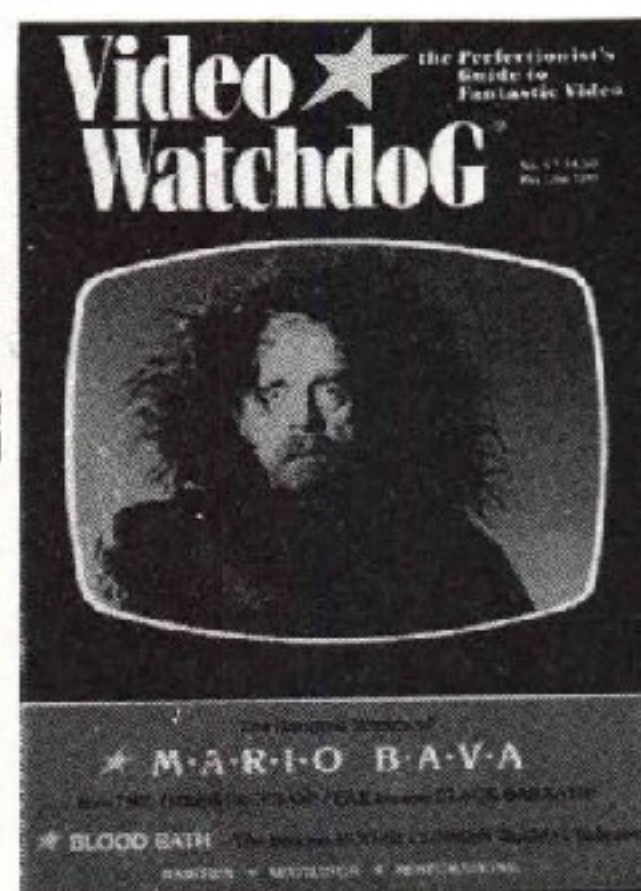
No. 1, 1990
 Jess Franco Interview, Videography and Essay, Bissette on CUT & RUN, CARNIVAL OF SOULS, Rod Serling, Venezuelan Video.



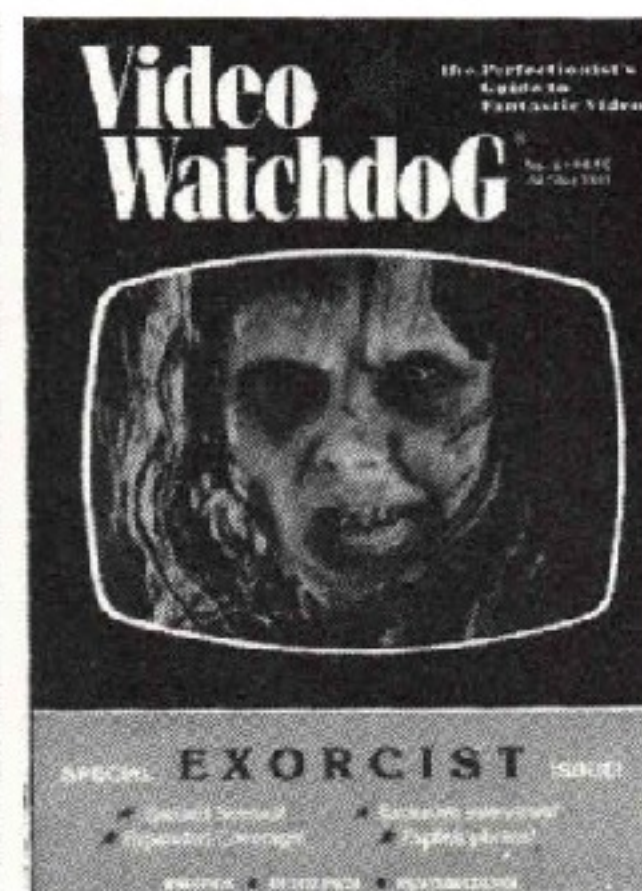
No. 3, Jan/Feb 1991
 GANJA & HESS, BLOOD COUPLE, ALIENS: SPECIAL EDITION, Pupi Avati, Alfred Hitchcock & PSYCHO.



No. 4, Mar/Apr 1991
 BLUE VELVET Missing Scenes, Coppola's OPERATION: TITIAN Part 1, Narciso Ibañez Serrador



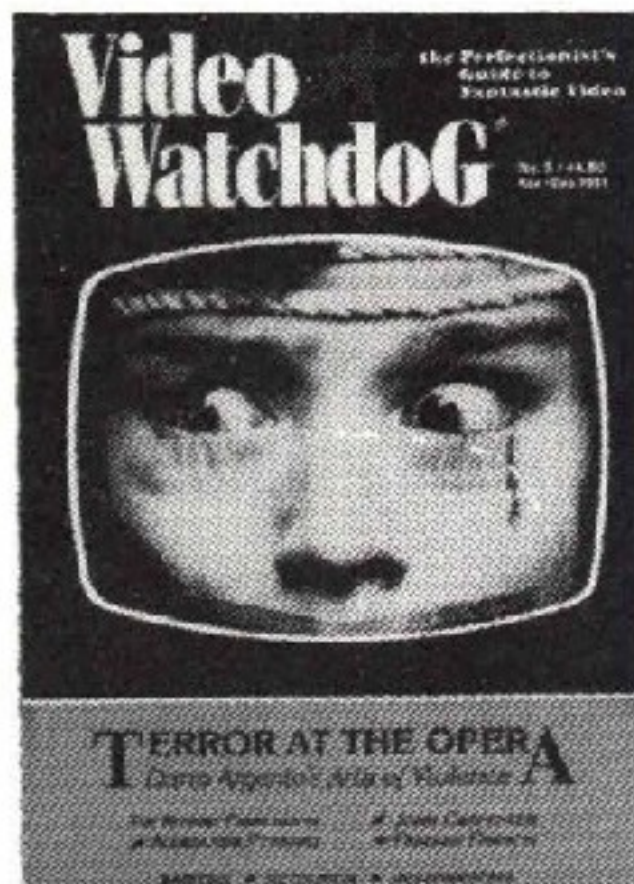
No. 5, May/Jun 1991
 Restoring Mario Bava's BLACK SABBATH, Jack Hill's BLOOD BATH (OPERATION: TITIAN Part 2)



No. 6, Jul/Aug 1991
 Special EXORCIST Issue! Missing Scenes, Subliminals, Suppressed Photos! Blatty, Friedkin, and Dick Smith interviewed.



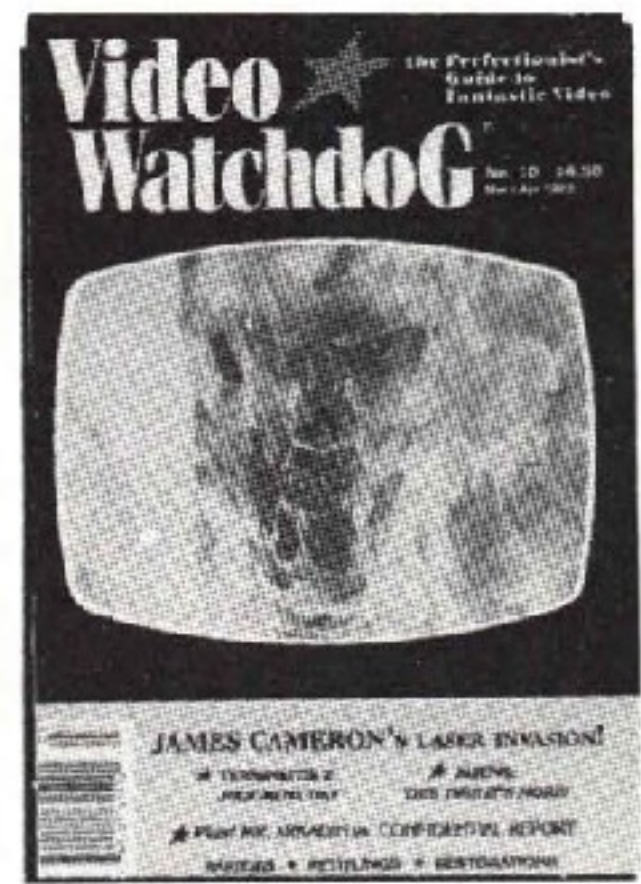
No. 7, Sep/Oct 1991
 Barbara Steele Interview and Videography, TERROR-CREATURES FROM THE GRAVE, TRACK OF THE VAMPIRE (TITIAN Part 3).



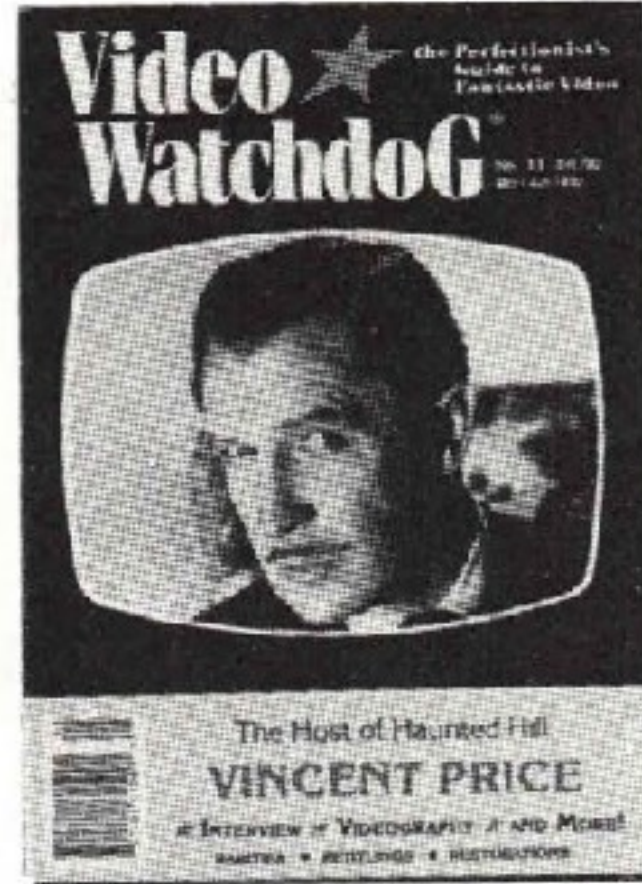
No. 8, Nov/Dec 1991
 Dario Argento's TERROR AT THE OPERA, The Russian Fairy Tales of Aleksandr Ptushko, John Carpenter, Freddie Francis



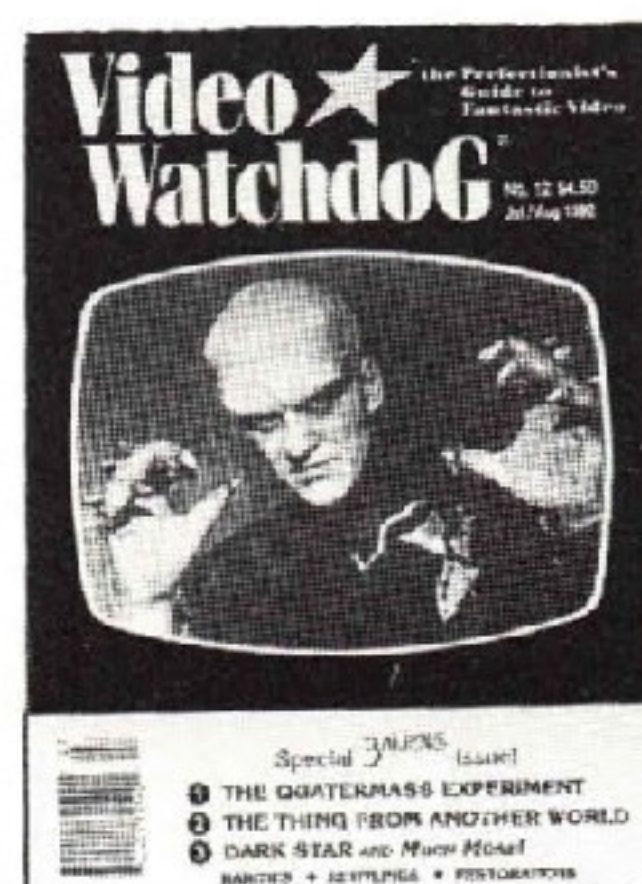
No. 9, Jan/Feb 1992
 Childhood Productions, Ptushko's Russian Fairy Tales Part 2, MAGIC VOYAGE OF SINBAD, Terence Fisher.



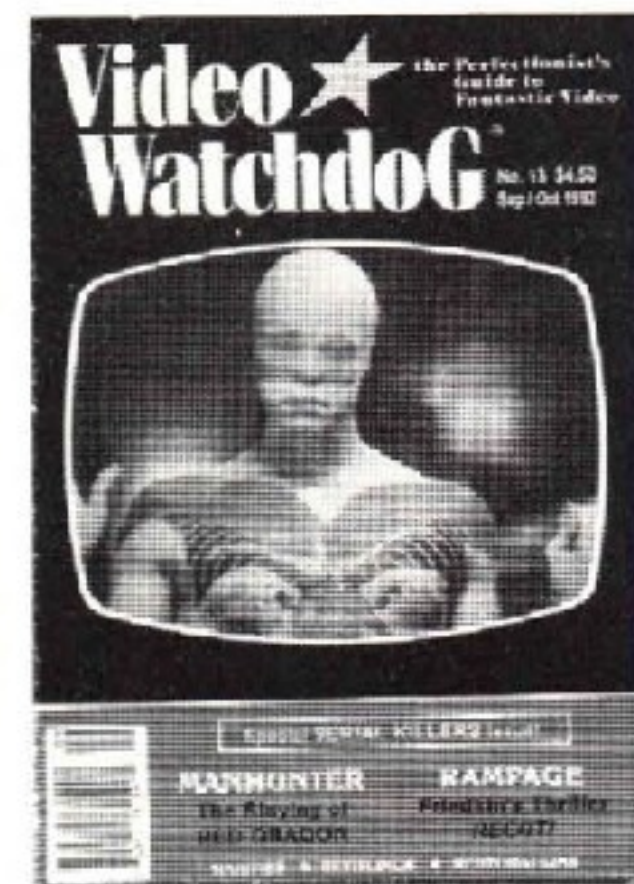
No. 10, Mar/Apr 1992
 TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY, ALIENS, MR. ARKADIN vs. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT, CARRIE, FANTASIA.



No. 11, May/Jun 1992
 Special VINCENT PRICE Issue! Interview, Videography and more! THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER, CITIZEN KANE.



No. 12, Jul/Aug 1992
 THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT, THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD, DARK STAR, FRIDAY THE 13TH, FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND



No. 13, Sep/Oct 1992
 Serial Killers Issue: The Unseen MANHUNTER, RAMPAGE, SOCIETY, THE TIME MACHINE, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, DR. STRANGE-LOVE, KARLOFF & LUGOSI



No. 14, Nov/Dec 1992
 The Films of CURTIS HARRINGTON, ALIEN 3, CAPE FEAR, SPANISH DRACULA, JAWS, TALES OF HOFFMANN, WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM, BLOOD AND ROSES

STOCK UP NOW!

**Video★
 Watchdog®**

P.O. Box 5283
 Cincinnati, OH 45205-0283
 (513) 471-8989

Prices effective through March 1, 1993	USA		Non-USA	
	Bulk	1st	Surface	Air
Current Issue	\$5.50	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$7.50
6-Issue Sub.	\$24	\$35	\$33	\$45
Back Issues (ea.)				
#3, 5-14	\$ 6	\$ 7	\$ 7	\$ 8
#1, 4	\$10	\$11	\$11	\$12

U.S. funds only. Visa/Mastercard accepted by mail or phone. Unless otherwise specified, subscriptions begin with next available issue. Back issues are not included.

15

1993

Alien • John Brahm • Laird Cregar • Curse of the Werewolf
Evil of Frankenstein • Jason and the Argonauts • The Lodger
Nightmare of Ecstasy • The Wasp Woman • Werewolf of London

